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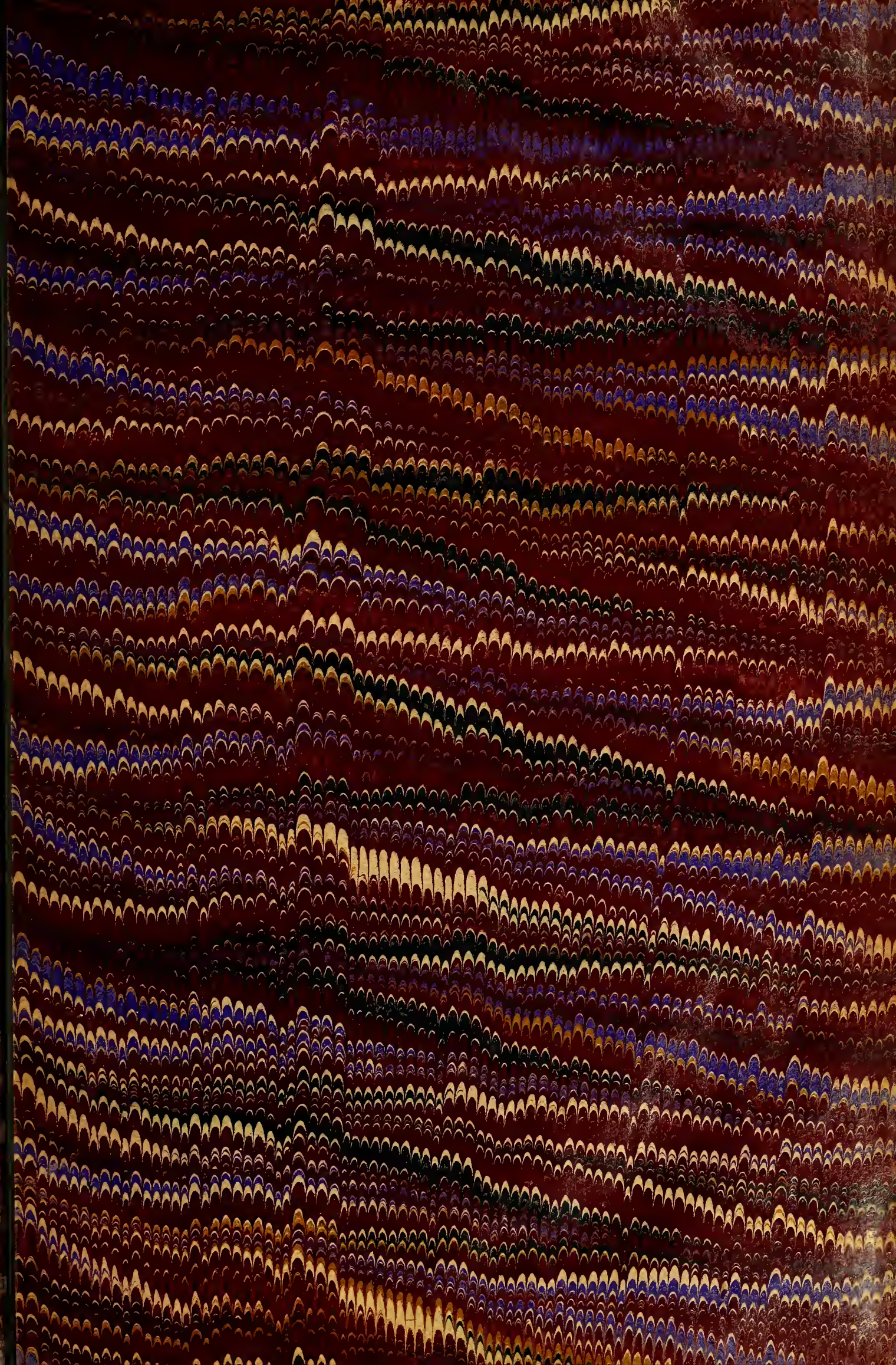
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ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE POOR LAWS

AND

RELIEF OF DISTRESS.

REPORT on IRELAND

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty.



LONDON:

PRINTED FOR HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE,
BY WYMAN AND SONS, LIMITED, 109, FETTER LANE, E.C.

And to be purchased, either directly or through any Bookseller, from
WYMAN AND SONS, LIMITED, 109, FETTER LANE, FLEET STREET, E.C.; and
32, ABINGDON STREET, WESTMINSTER, S.W.; or
OLIVER AND BOYD, TWEEDDALE COURT, EDINBURGH; or
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EXTRACT FROM THE
Royal Warrant.

Whereas We have deemed it expedient that a Commission should forthwith issue to enquire :—

(1) Into the working of the laws relating to the relief of poor persons in the United Kingdom ;

(2) Into the various means which have been adopted outside of the Poor Laws for meeting distress arising from want of employment, particularly during periods of severe industrial depression ;
 and to consider and report whether any, and if so, what, modification of the Poor Laws or changes in their administration or fresh legislation for dealing with distress are advisable ;

Now know ye that We, reposing great trust and confidence in your knowledge and ability, have authorized and appointed, and do by these Presents authorize and appoint, you, the said

(Here follow the names of the Commissioners)

to be Our Commissioners for the purposes of the said enquiry.

And for the better effecting the purposes of this Our Commission, We do by these Presents give and grant unto you, or any five or more of you, full power to call before you such persons as you shall judge likely to afford you any information upon the subject of this Our Commission ; to call for information in writing ; and also to call for, have access to and examine, all such books, documents, registers and records as may afford you the fullest information on the subject, and to enquire of and concerning the premises by all other lawful ways and means whatsoever.

And We do by these Presents authorize and empower you, or any of you, to visit and personally inspect such places as you may deem it expedient so to inspect for the more effectual carrying out of the purposes aforesaid.

And We do by these Presents will and ordain that this Our Commission shall continue in full force and virtue, and that you Our said Commissioners, or any five or more of you, may from time to time proceed in the execution thereof, and of every matter and thing therein contained, although the same be not continued from time to time by adjournment.

And We do further ordain that you, or any five or more of you, have liberty to report your proceedings under this Our Commission from time to time if you shall judge it expedient so to do.

And Our further will and pleasure is that you do, with as little delay as possible, report to Us under your hands and seals, or under the hands and seals of any five or more of you, your opinion upon the matters herein submitted for your consideration.

Given at Our Court at *Sandringham*, the Fourth day of *December*, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Five ; in the Fifth year of Our Reign.

By His Majesty's Command,

(Signed) A. AKERS-DOUGLAS.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE POOR LAWS AND RELIEF OF DISTRESS.

To the King's Most Excellent Majesty.

May it please Your Majesty,

1. In our Report, dated 4th February, 1909, we have already dealt with the Administration of the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress in England and Wales.

2. We now humbly beg to submit to Your Majesty our Report dealing with Ireland.

3. At the date of our appointment we found that a number of inquiries by Royal Commissions and by Parliamentary and Departmental Committees had recently been conducted or were actually proceeding, in reference to many subjects which came within the terms of our reference. We invited no special evidence in reference to the recommendations of such Commissions or Committees, but we undertook to consider any serious objections to them which might be offered to us. We further decided to accept generally these recommendations and the evidence on which they were based, unless we found that they were inconsistent with any general principles of Poor Law Administration which we might advocate as the foundation of our scheme of Poor Law Reform. The adoption of this policy enabled us to take full advantage of the exhaustive inquiries on Poor Law Reform which had been conducted by the Vice-Regal Commission appointed by Your Majesty's Lord Lieutenant-General and General Governor of Ireland. We learned that their report had been received with general approval by all sections of the Irish Press and the Irish public.

4. We felt, however, that it was essential that we should visit Ireland, and acquire some personal knowledge of the local conditions, and if necessary hear such evidence as might be useful in order to enable us to more fully understand the proposals of the Vice-Regal Commission.

5. We received very valuable evidence from Mr. E. Bourke, Senior Inspector of the Irish Local Government Board, in which he explained very fully the Irish Poor Laws and their administration, and dwelt particularly on any differences in the system in England and in Ireland. The Medical Commissioner of the Irish Local Government Board, T. J. Stafford, Esq., C.B., F.R.C.S.I., supplied us with a full and instructive Memorandum on Poor Law Dispensary Medical Relief in Ireland. He also gave oral evidence before the Commission. This evidence was especially interesting, as the Medical Dispensary system in Ireland is a more comprehensive system of Medical Relief for the Poor than has existed hitherto in Great Britain. Her Excellency, the Countess of Aberdeen, was also pleased to come before the Commission and gave a most interesting and instructive account of the efforts she was making in Ireland to combat tuberculosis, and of the organisation and extension of the Women's National Health Association for that purpose.

6. While the Commission sat in Dublin, small Committees took occasion to visit several institutions in the city and in the home counties. The Commission also

divided itself into three bodies, to visit workhouses, hospitals, and other institutions in Ireland, and to attend meetings of Boards of Guardians. One body made a rather extensive tour of inspection through Ulster, another along the western seaboard, and the third visited a large number of institutions in the South and South-West of Ireland. Altogether we visited about a third of the Unions in Ireland during the time at our disposal for the purpose. Some accounts of those visits, written by the Commissioners on the spot, will be found in the separate volume of reports on visits to institutions in England, Scotland, and Ireland.¹

7. The Vice-Regal Commission had not included in their terms of reference the question of distress arising from unemployment. Though Ireland, being an agricultural country, is not as much affected by this question as the great industrial centres of England and Scotland, yet, we deemed it right to have some evidence on the operation of the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905 in Ireland. We accordingly circulated amongst the various Distress Committees a list of questions, which, together with the replies received thereto, will be found in the Appendix.² We also directed our special investigator, Mr. Cyril Jackson, to proceed to Ireland and make inquiries, and we print in the Appendix the very valuable report³ received from him on the subject. Mr. Nannetti, the Ex-Lord Mayor of Dublin, the Lord Mayor of Belfast, the Mayor of Cork, the Mayor, and the High Sheriff of Waterford, and the Mayor of Drogheda, attended the Commission and gave evidence of unemployment in their respective cities.

8. As in England and Wales, and Scotland, we took a census of the persons relieved in Ireland on 31st March, 1906, classified by age and physical condition. The results of this enquiry will be found in the Appendix. At our request, the Local Government Board for Ireland obtained a return of all persons relieved during the year ended 30th September, 1907, showing the period and recurrence of their relief, and this return has been published as a Parliamentary Paper. Summary Tables have also been printed in the Appendix⁴ to this Report.

9. We have now to consider to what extent our recommendations for Reform in England harmonize with those of the Vice-Regal Commission.

10. We propose to follow generally the scheme of arrangement adopted in the Report already submitted to Your Majesty dealing with England and Wales, and we therefore, now proceed to give a sketch of the past and present state of the law as regards the poor in Ireland, and the institutions established for their relief.

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|---|-------------|----------|------|---------|
| 1 | <i>Vide</i> | Appendix | Vol. | XXVIII. |
| 2 | " | " | " | X. |
| 3 | " | " | " | XIX B. |
| 4 | " | " | " | XXXI. |

CHAPTER I.

HISTORICAL RETROSPECT.

11. Although there was no general provision for the relief of the poor in Ireland until 1838, several Acts passed by the Irish Parliament were more or less subsidiary to that object. Amongst these the following may be noticed, because they indicate the policy of the Legislature from time to time.

12. The 10th and 11th Charles I., cap. 4, (1634-5) is entitled “An act for erecting Houses of Correction and for the punishment of rogues and vagabonds, sturdy beggars and other lewd and idle persons.” For this purpose it was enacted that “there shall be built or otherwise provided within every County of Ireland, one or more fit and convenient house or houses of correction . . . with the intent that the same shall be used and employed for the keeping, correcting and setting to work of the said rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars and other idle and disorderly persons.”

13. The 2nd Anne, cap. 19 (1703) is entitled “An act for erecting a workhouse in the City of Dublin, for employing and maintaining the poor thereof.” The preamble declares that “the necessities, number, and continual increase of the poor within the city of Dublin and liberties thereto adjoining, are very great and exceeding burdensome, for want of workhouses to set them to work, and a sufficient authority to compel them thereto : and whereas the lord mayor, sheriffs, commons, and citizens of Dublin, for the encouragement of so charitable and necessary a work, are willing not only to appropriate a piece of ground for a workhouse within the city, but also to endow the same with lands of inheritance of the value of £100 per annum”; it was therefore enacted that there should be a corporation to continue for ever within the county of the city of Dublin to be entitled the governor and guardians of the poor, and to consist of the chief governor (or lord lieutenant), the lord mayor, the lord chancellor, the archbishop of Dublin, the sheriffs, the justices of the peace, the members of the corporation and many others named, who were to have perpetual succession as a corporation. They were to assemble on the first Thursday in every month “for relieving, regulating and setting at work all vagabonds and beggars which shall come within the city or liberties.” They were likewise empowered to apprehend all idle or poor persons begging, or seeking relief, or who receive parish alms within the city or liberties, and also to detain and keep in the service of the said corporation until the age of 16, any poor child or children found or taken up within the said city or liberties above 5 years of age, and to apprentice out such children to any honest persons, being protestants, a male child until the age of 24, and a female child until the age of 21. The governors and directors were empowered to inflict reasonable punishment or correction, from time to time, on all persons within the workhouse who shall not conform to the established regulations ; and to have care of the poor of the said city and liberties of what age or kind soever they be, infants under the age of 5 years only excepted ; and were also empowered “to examine search and see what poor persons are come into, inhabiting, or residing within the said city and liberties, or any part thereof and to apprehend any idle vagrants and beggars and to cause them to be set and kept at work in the said workhouse for any time not exceeding 7 years.”

14. This Act although local is very important, it being the first in which a direct provision is made for the relief of the poor in Ireland. It recognises the principle of taxing the public for the prevention of vagrancy and begging conjointly with the relief of the destitute. The corporation was reconstituted and its powers extended in 1728 by the 1st George II., cap. 27, and ultimately the workhouse became merged in the Dublin Foundling hospital.

15. By the 11th sect. of the Act 2 George I., cap. 17, (1715) provision is made for apprenticing helpless children. The preamble states :—“whereas there are in almost every part of this kingdom great numbers of helpless children who are forced to beg their bread and who will in all likelihood if some proper care be not taken of their education become hereafter not only unprofitable but dangerous to their country, and whereas it is hoped that many of them may be entertained in comfortable service, and others may be

bound out to and bred up in useful callings, if well disposed persons could have any fair prospect of receiving hereafter by the labour of such poor children any return, suitable to the trouble and charges they must necessarily undergo in bringing them through that state of childhood ; " it was therefore enacted that the minister and churchwardens shall have power with the consent of a justice of the peace, to bind out any child they find begging within their parish or any other poor child with the consent of the parents, to any honest and substantial protestant housekeeper or tradesman that will entertain such child until the age of twenty-one, if as a menial servant, or till the age of twenty-four, if as an apprentice to a trade.

The Cork Workhouse.

16. In 1735, an Act was passed for "erecting a workhouse in the city of Cork, for employing and maintaining the poor, punishing vagabonds, and providing for and educating foundling children. This Act was similar in its main provisions to the Dublin Act of 1703.

Separation of foundling children from Vagrants.

17. The double functions assigned to the Dublin workhouse of dealing both with vagrants and foundling children were deemed to be inconsistent, and the 11th and 12th George III., cap. 11, (1771-2) was passed to remedy this defect. It was recognised that the reception of vagabonds and strolling beggars into the same house, or within the same walls with children was manifestly injurious ; it was therefore enacted that no vagabond or strolling beggar should be sent into the same house or kept within the same walls with children but when apprehended should be sent to a "bridewell, or such other place as the governors appoint." A rough scheme of classification having been thus provided it was enacted in the 16th section, "that all and every poor child and children under the age of six years who shall be found or taken up within the said city and liberties, or sent to the foundling hospital shall be received and kept there or sent to nurse therefrom, and that all children presented for reception who appear to be six years old and not exceeding eight, shall be received if there be room and the children appear to be sound in mind and body." The children were to be instructed in the principles of the protestant religion and the governors were empowered to place out as apprentices, by proper indentures, any of the said children, to persons being protestants and following any trade or calling, to seafaring men or to gentlemen or housekeepers for servants, for any term not exceeding seven years. On comparing this with the original Act of 1703, and with the Cork Act of 1735, it will be seen that the chief difference is the entire separation of the vagabond or culpable class, from the foundling children, and the extension of the powers to children under 5 years of age who are excluded from the acts of 1703 and 1735.

The Vestry Act of 1772.

18. The Act 11th and 12th George III., cap. 15 (1772) recited that, "whereas poor infants are frequently deserted by their parents and left exposed to the inclemency of the weather in the streets and other places in cities and whereas the inhabitants of several parishes in which children are so exposed, refuse to raise money for the support of such children, by which many of them perish," it was enacted that in every parish of every city (excepting Dublin and Cork) a vestry should be held annually in the first week of June, at which three overseers should be chosen, to take up and provide for the maintenance of all such children. The modest sum of £5 was allowed to cover the total cost for the bringing up of each child, and the overseers were required to collect such money as might be necessary for this purpose. In the following year this Act was extended to the whole of Ireland by the 13th and 14th Geo. III., cap. 24, and a system of Poor Law relief, limited to the requirements of a single class, was set up in Ireland.

County Infirmaries.

19. Under an Act passed in 1765, County infirmaries were first established in Ireland. The Act provided that contributions might be made out of the County fund, as an inducement to subscribers to make up the deficiency in the amount required to maintain the hospital.

Badging the poor.

20. The 11th and 12th George III., cap. 30 (1771-2), was "an Act for Badging such poor as shall be found unable to support themselves by labour and otherwise providing for them and for restraining such as shall be found able to support themselves by labour or industry from begging." Under this Act corporations were established in every county at large, and in every county of a city or town. They were empowered to accept subscriptions and donations and acquire land, "for the

sites of houses to be built for the reception of the helpless poor and for keeping in restraint sturdy beggars and vagabonds." They could grant badges to such of the helpless poor as had resided one year in their respective counties, cities or towns, with a license to beg within such limits for such time as might be thought fit. They were required, as soon as they possessed sufficient funds, "to build hospitals to be called workhouses or houses of industry," for the relief of the poor of their respective counties, "as plain, as durable, and at as moderate expense as may be." Every man above fifteen years of age found begging without a badge, was to be committed to the stocks for any time not exceeding three hours for the first offence, and six hours for every subsequent offence. The children of persons licensed to beg, as well as fatherless and deserted children found strolling and begging were to be conveyed to the Committee of the County, City or Town, and placed, if under 8 years of age, in a Charter School Nursery¹; children above that age to be apprenticed. Grand Juries were required to present certain sums annually for this object, and all rectors, vicars and incumbents were required to permit such clergymen as the respective corporations might appoint, to preach sermons in their churches annually, and to permit collections to be made for the objects contemplated by the Act.

21. There was, however, no certain and sufficient provision for carrying these enactments into effect, and in no instance was such provision made compulsory. A portion only of the funds necessary was imposed on the ratepayers—the remainder was sought to be obtained by voluntary contributions.

22. Sir George Nicholls in his history of the Poor Laws, from which the foregoing extracts are taken, observes:—"The training up and educating poor children as protestants and the repression of vagabondism, appear to be the objects chiefly sought to be attained by all these Acts of the Irish Parliament; and to these objects the relief of the infirm and destitute poor seem to be regarded as a matter altogether secondary and subordinate."²

After the Union between England and Ireland other enactments dealing with the relief of the poor were passed. Amongst these may be mentioned:—The 45th Geo. III., cap. 111, 1805 (Dispensaries). The 46th Geo. III., c. 95, 1806 (Hospital and Infirmaries). The 49th Geo. III. c. 101, 1809 (Irish Bogs). The 54th Geo. III. c. 112, and 58th Geo. III. c. 47, 1814–18 (Fever Hospital). The 59th Geo. III., c. 41 (Officers of Health to be appointed). The 57th Geo. III. c. 106, 1817 (Lunatic Asylums). The 3rd Geo. IV. caps. 3 and 84, 1822 (Distress and Extension of Relief). The 6th Geo. IV., c. 102, 1825 (Deserted Children).

House of Commons Committee Report, 1804.

23. This Committee was appointed to make inquiry "respecting the poor in Ireland." The Committee considered "that the adoption of a general system of provision for the poor of Ireland by way of parish rate as in England, or in any similar manner would be highly injurious to the country and would not produce any real or permanent advantage, even to the lower class of people who must be the objects of such support." The Committee state that the Acts relating to the establishment of Infirmaries or County Hospitals "have been carried into effect in almost all counties, whilst the Act empowering Grand Juries to present for the support of a ward for insane or idiotic persons has not been complied with." The Committee add that the very important matters referred to them require more deliberation than the advanced period of the Session permitted, and they recommended that the investigation should be renewed the following Session. It would appear that this was not done.

House of Commons Committee Report, 1819.³

24. The Committee was appointed to inquire into the state of disease, and also into the condition of the labouring poor in Ireland. The Committee considered that the prevalence of fever in Ireland was a calamitous indication of general distress, and in order "to prevent the migration through the country of numerous bodies of mendicant poor who, pressed by want and seeking relief, have fatally contributed to

¹ Charter Schools were established in 1733, by Charter of George II. They are under the Incorporated Society for promoting English Protestant Schools in Ireland.

² Nicholls' History of the Irish Poor Laws, p. 59.

³ Sir John Newport was Chairman of this Committee.

the general diffusion of disease," they made certain recommendations as to the punishment of persons found begging or wandering as vagabonds. As regards the second head of their inquiry—the condition or employment of the labouring poor—the Committee found "themselves in a great measure controlled by the unquestionable principle that legislative interference in the operations of human industry is as much as possible to be avoided." Their inquiries were particularly directed to agriculture and fishing. They refer to the report of the Commission on the Bogs of Ireland which they consider, "prove the immense amount of land easily reclaimable and convertible to the production of grain, almost without limit, for exportation." They recommend the draining of these bogs, and the formation of roads in mountain districts, which they consider would afford profitable employment and greatly increase the productive power of the country. As regards the fisheries, the Committee alluded to what had been done in Scotland, under an improved system of fishing laws, and recommended that the precedent of Scotland should be applied to Ireland.

House of Commons Committee Report of 1823.¹

25. This Committee was appointed "to inquire into the condition of the labouring poor in Ireland, with a view to facilitate the application of the funds of private individuals and associations for their employment in useful and productive labour." The Committee recommended the encouragement of the fisheries, the erection of piers, the formation of harbours, and the opening of mountain roads, and the instruction of the peasantry in agriculture. They considered that the aid of government in support of local effort was absolutely necessary.

House of Commons Committee Report of 1830.¹

26. This Committee was appointed, "to take into consideration the state of the poorer classes in Ireland, and the best means of improving their condition." Their elaborate and comprehensive report is arranged under three principal heads:—First the state and condition of the poorer classes; second, the laws which affect the poor and the charitable institutions; third, the remedial measures suggested. Amongst the remedies emigration, the improvement of bogs and waste lands, the embankment and drainage of marsh lands, the prosecution of public works on a large scale, the education of the people not only in elementary knowledge but in habits of industry; the encouragement of manufactures, the extension of fisheries, and lastly the introduction of a system of poor laws either on the English or Scotch principles, or so modified as to be adapted to the peculiar circumstances of Ireland, were all recommended. The County infirmaries, the Committee thought, might be considered as adequate for the purpose for which they were intended. They found that the dispensaries afforded relief annually to upwards of half a million of persons, and they recommended that the presentments² for their support and that of fever hospitals, should be made compulsory. The subject of lunatic asylums is also dealt with, and as regards a proposition for extending houses of industry generally throughout the country, and for rendering their erection and support compulsory, the Committee were of opinion that "establishments of this description combining two distinct purposes of punishment and relief are not likely to be useful, either as prisons or hospitals."

¹ Mr. Spring Rice, afterwards Lord Monteagle, was Chairman of both these Committees.

² The Irish Counties are divided into baronies; the baronies into parishes; and the parishes into townlands. Previous to the passing of the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898, the Grand Juries were the road and pier authorities. They managed and maintained lunatic asylums, county infirmaries and some other institutions. They raised a county-at-large rate, called the Grand Jury cess over the whole County for certain purposes, and a baronial cess varying in the different baronies, for other purposes. The parish was not, and is not, a rating area. The County Councils have taken over the fiscal powers of the Grand Juries, and the baronial cess is superseded by a rate over the rural and urban districts. The procedure under the Grand Jury system was as follows:—The Justices of the Peace and the largest cesspayers in each barony assembled in Barony Presentment Sessions. They considered the works required in the barony, and sent forward proposals, (presentments) to the Grand Jury. The Grand Jury accepted, rejected, or modified those presentments, and also considered the expenditure required on main roads, and other County-at-large expenditure, *e.g.*, on Lunatic Asylums, County Infirmaries, &c. The Grand Jury next presented the works and expenditure approved of by them to the Judge of Assize, and his *fiat* being given, the raising of the proposed Grand Jury cess, baronial cess, and expenditure in the proposed manner was legalized.

*The Royal Commission of 1833-6.*¹

27. On the 25th September, 1833, a Commission was appointed "to inquire into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland, and into the various institutions at present established by law for their relief; and also whether any and what further remedial measures appear to be requisite to ameliorate the condition of the Irish poor or any portion of them."

28. As to the first point the Commission state:—"We cannot estimate the number of persons in Ireland out of work and in distress during thirty weeks of the year at less than 585,000, nor the number of persons dependent upon them at less than 1,800,000, making in the whole 2,385,000." As regards the "institutions at present established by law" for the relief of the poor it appears that these consisted of:—

Number of persons in distress and the number of institutions for their relief in 1834.

1. Medical institutions viz., County infirmaries, dispensaries, and fever hospitals.
2. Lunatic asylums.
3. Houses of industry.
4. Foundling hospitals.

There were 31 county infirmaries and 5 city and town infirmaries; 452 dispensaries (in addition to 42 united with fever hospitals); 28 fever hospitals; 11 lunatic asylums; 9 houses of industry (or workhouses); 2 large foundling hospitals, (one in Dublin and the other in Cork), and a small one in Galway.

The total charge of the foregoing institutions was:—

| | £. |
|---|---------|
| Infirmaries, dispensaries and fever hospitals - - - | 109,054 |
| Lunatic asylums - - - - - | 26,247 |
| Houses of industry - - - - - | 32,967 |
| Foundling hospitals - - - - - | 36,628 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 204,896 |

Of this sum upwards of £50,000 appears to have been furnished by parliamentary grants, the remainder being derived from grand jury presentments, voluntary contributions and other local sources.

29. As regards the above institutions the Commission observed that:—"the establishment of these, except as to lunatic asylums, is not compulsory, but dependent upon subscription or the will of Grand Juries; that there are but nine houses of industry in the whole country; that while the provision made for the sick poor in some places is extensive, it is in other places utterly inadequate; and that there is no general provision made for the aged, the impotent or the destitute." The Commission did not consider that the workhouse system of England would be at all suited to Ireland. They observe:—"the law of England requires that work and support shall be found for all able-bodied persons who may from time to time be out of employment. It thus appears that the workhouse system in England is used as a means, not so much of setting the able-bodied directly to work, as of putting them upon their own resources and forcing them when they cannot find employment in the parish or district to which they belong, to seek it elsewhere, through migration. In Ireland it is not necessary to establish workhouses in order to produce this effect, for the law gives to the able-bodied there no right to demand employment or support. The difficulty too in Ireland is not to make the able-bodied look for employment, but to find it profitably for the many who seek it." The Commission recommended that a legal provision should be made, and rates levied, for the relief and support of incurable as well as curable lunatics, idiots, epileptic persons, cripples, deaf and dumb and blind poor and all who labour under permanent bodily infirmities—such relief and support to be afforded within the walls of public institutions, also for the relief of the sick poor in hospitals, infirmaries and convalescent establishments, or by entire attendance and a supply of food as well as medicine, where the

Institutions dependent on Subscriptions.

Recommendations of the Royal Commission of 1833-6.

¹ This Commission was presided over by the Most Rev. Dr. Whately, who was Archbishop of Dublin at the time.

Recommendations
of the Royal
Commission of
1833-6.

persons to be relieved are not in a state to be removed from home; also for the purpose of emigration, the support of penitentiaries to which vagrants may be sent, and for the maintenance of deserted children; also towards the relief of aged and infirm persons, and orphans of helpless widows, with young children, of the families of sick persons, and of casual destitution. For the purpose of carrying out these proposals the Commission recommended that Ireland should be divided into relief districts, and that there should be a Board of Guardians for each district—there being a Poor Law Commission as in England, with Assistant Commissioners to supervise the local boards. They further recommended, with the object of developing the resources of the country and of thus improving the condition of the poor, certain public works, such as the reclamation of waste land, the enforcement of drainage and fencing of land, agricultural instruction, &c.

30. The recommendations of the Commission were not acted on. Lord John Russell, then Secretary of State for the Home Department and Leader of the House of Commons, in referring to the report of the Commissioners observed:—¹ “It appears to me that they have bestowed too great a degree of consideration on the question by what means, by what State resources, you can improve the general welfare of the country, and have not confined themselves entirely to the question as to the destitute classes, which was more particularly put into their hands.” Sir George (then Mr.) Nicholls, one of the English Poor Law Commissioners, was instructed to visit Ireland and ascertain whether anything resembling the machinery of the English Poor Law could be there applied. He was directed amongst other things to inquire “whether any kind of workhouse can be established which shall not in point of food, clothing and warmth, give its inmates a superior degree of comfort to the common lot of the independent labourer.” He was also, “to carefully weigh the important question whether a rate limited in its amount, rather than in its application to particular classes, might be usefully directed to the erection and maintenance of workhouses for all who sought relief as paupers.” He was likewise “to examine how far it is judicious or practicable to offer relief to whole classes of the sick, the infirm or orphan children.”

Mr. Nicholls' Reports.

31. Mr. Nicholls furnished three reports which were accepted by Government, and subsequently became the foundation of the Poor Law system in Ireland. He considered that a system of Poor Laws, as nearly as possible similar to the English system, should be established in Ireland, and that the workhouse system might be there relied on as a test of destitution and a measure of relief. After referring to the governing principle of the workhouse system in England he observes:—“I have found in the state of Ireland no sufficient reason for departing from the principle of the English Poor Law which recognises destitution alone as the grounds of relief—or for establishing a distinction in the one country which does not exist in the other. I propose, therefore, to empower the presiding authority, to admit the claims of all alike, able-bodied as well as infirm, young as well as old, male and female, to relief within the workhouse, on the ground of actual destitution”. “Confinement of any kind is more irksome to an Irishman than it is even to an Englishman. Hence, although he may be lodged, fed and clothed in a workhouse, better than he could lodge, feed and clothe himself by his own exertions, he will yet, like the Englishman, never enter the workhouse unless driven thither for refuge by actual necessity; and he will not then remain there one moment longer than that necessity exists. The test of the workhouse is then, I think, as likely to be to the full as efficient in Ireland, as experience proves it to have been in England.”²

32. The various recommendations made by Mr. Nicholls are embodied in the Poor Relief Act of 1838 and are referred to in the succeeding chapters.

¹ Speech of Lord John Russell, 1 Dec., 1837.

² Nicholls' First Report, p. 14.

CHAPTER II.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE POOR LAW SYSTEM INTO IRELAND.

33. As already stated, a Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1804 recorded their emphatic opinion that the adoption of a general system of provision for the poor of Ireland, by way of parish rate as in England, or in any similar manner, would be highly injurious to the country, and would produce no real or permanent advantage, even to the lower class of people who must be the object of such support. The Royal Commission of 1833-6 had likewise reported that they could not "recommend the present workhouse system of England as at all suited to Ireland," and they suggested a variety of remedial measures. By the publication of the Report of the Commission the Government of the day were placed in this position:—They could not reject the complicated scheme for the improvement of Ireland that had been submitted to them by the Commission, without proposing some other measure. Between the scheme of the Commission, and the adoption of a Poor Law based upon the principle of the English Act, there seemed to be no alternative. Ultimately Mr. Nicholls' views were accepted by the Government, and he was directed to frame a Bill embodying all his recommendations.

OPPOSITION TO THE MEASURE.

34. The intimation that the Government proposed to submit to Parliament a Bill for the better relief of the poor of Ireland, founded on Mr. Nicholls' recommendations, provided discussions that were remarkable, even in those days of great public excitement, for the violence and acrimony with which they were conducted. Men representing different interests and influenced by different motives united in opposition to the proposal to give the destitute poor of *all* classes a right to relief at the cost of the property of the country. The Royal Commission of 1833-6 had estimated that the number of persons out of work and in distress, during thirty weeks of the year, with their dependents amounted to 2,385,000; that the cost of erecting workhouses for these, if all were to be relieved, would be about £4,000,000, and the cost of their support £5,000,000 a year; whereas the gross rental of Ireland (exclusive of towns), was estimated at under £10,000,000, and the net income of landlords at £6,000,000. It cannot, therefore, be a matter for surprise that the landlords especially, were opposed to a measure which, in the face of the above statement, they could only regard as confiscatory.

35. Lord John Russell, in introducing the Bill on February 13th, 1837, pointed out that when a country is overrun by marauders and mendicants, having no proper means of subsistence, but preying on the industry, and relying on the charity of others, the introduction of a Poor Law serves several important objects. In the first place, it enables the country to prohibit vagrancy, which is so often connected with outrage, by offering a substitute to those who rely on vagrancy and outrage as a means of subsistence. He also considered such a measure of use in interesting the landowners, and persons of property, in the welfare of their tenants. If a landlord is compelled to furnish means for subsistence of destitute persons, it becomes his interest to see that those around him have the means of living. Almost the greatest benefit that could be conferred on a country was, he observed, a high standard of subsistence for the labouring classes. Poor Relief Bill,
1837.

Dealing with the Report of the Royal Commission of 1833-6, he observed that the Commission proposed, in the first place, that a large class of persons should be provided for at the public expense, by means of a national and local rate. They advised also that money should be afforded for emigration, and that depôts should be provided for persons preparing to emigrate. In considering the Reports, the Government had great doubts whether it was a good principle to provide only for certain classes, and whether those depôts for emigration could be safely and advantageously adopted. He considered that the real principle was to afford relief to the destitute, and to the destitute

only, and that it would be quite as wrong to refuse relief to the able-bodied person in that situation, as to afford relief to the cripple, the widow, or a deaf and dumb person who had other means of support. A Poor Law ought to be grounded on destitution as affording a plain guide to relief. He had made some inquiry as to the amount of relief afforded to mendicants and found that the farmers were paying about 1s. per acre a year for their support, amounting in all to not less than £700,000 or £800,000 a year.

It had been urged, he said, as a means of preventing undue pressure on the workhouse, that a residence in the district of three years or some other definite period should be a condition to any persons being relieved therein, but he was opposed to establishing a law of settlement in Ireland, being quite convinced that it was one of the greatest evils in the Poor Laws of England. It circumscribes the market for industry; it has led to immense litigation, and any person, he observed, "who has attended the quarter sessions, and there witnessed the disputes that arise between parishes as to whether a person had been hired for a year and a day, whether he had been ordered to go home on the day before the expiration of the term, so as to destroy the settlement, or whether he had served a full year and a day, and various other similar questions—any person who has attended to this litigation, and those disputes, will not have any wish that I should introduce the question of settlement into the Bill."

36. A lengthened discussion took place in which Mr. O'Connell, Mr. Shaw, Lord Howick, Sir Robert Peel, Lord Stanley, and others took part, and the Bill was ordered to be read a first time. It was read a second time on May 1st. In Committee many members were of opinion that a law of settlement was necessary, but this was defeated by 120 to 68.

37. King William IV. died on June 20th, Parliament was prorogued on July 17th, and the Irish Poor Relief Bill and other measures then in progress were therefore put an end to for the time being. The Bill was re-introduced on December 1st, 1837, Mr. Nicholls having meanwhile been directed to make further inquiries and to report. It was read a second time on February 5th, 1838. On the Motion for going into Committee, Mr. O'Connell strongly opposed the Bill and moved that it be committed for that day six months. On February 23rd the question of settlement was again very fully discussed, and its introduction decided against by 103 to 31. The Bill was passed by the Commons on April 30th, 1838.

Poor Relief Bill
passed by the
Commons.

Opposition to the
Bill in the House
of Lords.

38. In the House of Lords the feeling with regard to the Bill was decidedly more adverse than had been the case in the Lower House. Many Irish peers whose properties were deeply encumbered were alarmed at the threatened imposition of a poor rate, which they feared would swallow up a large portion of their incomes. On May 21st the Bill was read a second time, after a long and stormy debate lasting nine hours. Lord Melbourne, who moved the second reading, observed that the measure was founded on the amended system of English Poor Law. It was, in fact, an adaptation of the Act of 1834 to the circumstances of Ireland, with such alterations as were required by the peculiar circumstances of that country, and as the experience of its working suggested. It would, amongst other things, form the foundation of a measure for the suppression of mendicancy, and one great advantage to which he looked as arising from it, was that the struggle for land and the violent means the people took of enforcing what they conceived to be their rights with regard to it would be much lessened, if not extinguished. The Marquis of Londonderry, Lord Lyndhurst and many other Peers, spoke strongly against the Bill. The Duke of Wellington supported it; he anticipated that the measure would induce the gentry of Ireland, whether resident or not, to look after their properties and pay some attention to the state of the population on their estates. With regard to settlement, he was firmly convinced that its establishment, in connection with the Bill, would be productive of unbounded litigation and expense, and lead to disputes of which no one could see the end. At the same time, he thought that care should be taken that all parishes should be required to pay the expenses connected with the relief of their paupers, "that being one of the principles of the Poor Law in this country, and such an amendment should be introduced into the present Bill."

39. The second reading was carried by 149 to 20. In Committee it was decided by 107 to 41, after a lengthened discussion, to support the principle of the 41st

Clause of the Bill. This clause provided that relief to the destitute might be administered in the workhouses, at the discretion of the Boards of Guardians, subject to the conditions—in the first place, of a preference being given to the aged and infirm poor and to destitute children; and in the second place, to persons residing in the Union before those not so resident, whenever there was not sufficient accommodation for all the destitute. These latter provisions were introduced at the instance of the Duke of Wellington, in order to meet the objections, and mitigate the hostility of the opponents of the measure, as was also the provision in the 44th Clause, charging the cost of relief to the several electoral divisions, instead of to the Union at large, as it before stood. On this latter point, Mr. Nicholls observes: “The localisation of the charge upon the electoral divisions approximates too nearly to settlement to be quite satisfactory. I wish this had been left as it at first stood; but so long as no right to relief, and no power of removal, are given, we shall, I trust, be able to avoid the infliction of actual settlement.” Relief optional.

40. The Bill received the Royal assent on July 31st, 1838.

41. It will be seen from the foregoing that the Irish Poor Law system was an offshoot from the English system. Furthermore, Mr. Nicholls was entrusted with the administration of the Act, four of the English Assistant Commissioners being sent to assist him. Mr. Nicholls remained in Ireland from 1838 to 1842, when two of the Assistant Commissioners, (Mr. Gulson and Mr. Power), were deputed to act instead. On the appointment of an additional Commissioner in 1845, the delegation to Mr. Gulson and Mr. Power was revoked, and Mr. E. T. B. Twisleton, took charge of the administrative details in Ireland. On the formation of a separate Poor Law Commission for Ireland by the Act 10 and 11 Vic. c. 90, 1847, Mr. Twisleton was appointed as Chief Commissioner, the new Commission comprising in addition the Chief Secretary for the time being, and the Under Secretary. Mr. Twisleton resigned in 1849, and Mr. (afterwards Sir Alfred) Power was again sent to Ireland, this time in the capacity of Chief Commissioner. On the formation of the Local Government Board for Ireland in 1872, Sir Alfred Power became its first Vice-President, an office which he continued to hold for eight years. Bill passed in the House of Lords

42. It will thus be seen that from the introduction of the Poor Law system into Ireland in 1838, down to the year 1880, the chief administrative officer was selected from amongst those trained in the English system. It may also be mentioned that the architect employed to design the workhouses was Mr. Wilkinson, who had acquired experience “in the erection of workhouses in Wales under circumstances and with materials not very dissimilar to what exists in Ireland.”

The Poor Relief Act of 1838.

43. The salient provisions of this Act were:—

(1) The division of the country into Unions, composed of electoral divisions, which in turn were made up of “townlands.”¹

(2) The formation of a Board of Guardians for each Union—the Board consisting of elected and ex-officio Guardians.²

(3) The establishment of a Central Authority, viz., the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales.

(4) A compulsory rate for the relief of the poor.

(5) The relief to be at the discretion of the Guardians, and accordingly no poor person, however destitute, to be held to have a statutory right to relief. A preference to be given to the aged, the infirm, the defective and the children; after these had been provided for, the Guardians to be at liberty to relieve such other persons as they might deem to be destitute, priority to be given to those resident in the Union, in the event of the accommodation in the workhouse being insufficient for all.

(6) The relief to be limited to relief in the workhouse.

¹ *Vide* paragraph 139.

² Ex-officio Guardians were selected from Justices of the Peace who were not Stipendiary Magistrates, Assistant Barristers, or persons in holy orders (*vide* Sec. 23 of Poor Relief (Ireland) Act, 1838).

(7) The relief to be subject to the "directions and control" of the Poor Law Commissioners, who, however, were prohibited from interfering in individual cases for the purpose of ordering relief. The Commissioners to make Orders for the guidance and control of Guardians, wardens, officers, the auditing of accounts and for carrying the Act into execution in all other respects as they might think proper.

(8) The Commissioners, the Guardians, or any other person not to be at liberty to apply the poor rate, directly or indirectly, in any manner or to any purpose not expressly provided for in the Act.

(9) The Commissioners to take orders for the due performance of religious services in workhouses, and for appointing chaplains, one being of the then Established Church, one a Protestant Dissenter, and one a Roman Catholic. No inmate to be obliged to be present at any religious service contrary to his principles, and no child to be educated in a creed different from that of his parents or surviving parent to which such parents or parent might object.

(10) Persons to be assisted to emigrate on an application by the majority of ratepayers in the electoral division, such assistance to be limited to sums not exceeding in any one year one shilling in the pound on the net annual value of the rateable property in the division.

CHAPTER III.

RELIEF ADMINISTRATION IN IRELAND.

THE ENGLISH POOR LAW COMMISSIONERS, 1838-1847.

THE HISTORY OF THE FAMINE PERIOD.

44. Such were the broad lines laid down for the guidance of the Commissioners by the Poor Relief Act of 1838. It would seem that it was not originally contemplated that the duties devolving on the Central Authority should be as arduous or extensive as they subsequently proved to be. Mr. Nicholls considered that there were no insuperable difficulties in the way of the English "Commissioners being made the instruments of establishing the new law in Ireland," and that they were "competent to the additional duty." The Act provided (Section 119) for the appointment of an additional Commissioner, but this power was not exercised for seven years.

45. Before the machinery of the new Poor Law could be set in motion, or indeed a single workhouse erected, the Commissioners were confronted with the cry of distress. The wet and uncongenial summer and autumn of 1839 caused great apprehension as to the effect on the crops, and the inquiries made by the Commissioners showed that there was much ground for alarm. Many applications were made to the Commissioners and the Government, with a view to rendering the Poor Law available, should distress actually arise. The Commissioners, in a Minute dated December 5th, 1839, explained their position, and pointed out that, whether the relief provided under the Act was suitable and sufficient or not, the Commissioners could not legally deviate, in the slightest degree, from the course the Act prescribed, neither did there reside in the Commissioners any power or discretion to authorise such deviation. It had been suggested that the law should be altered early the following Session, so as to allow other modes of relief as a temporary measure, but the Commissioners considered that, Parliament having decided to prohibit all relief except in the workhouse, such a course would be re-opening a question upon which the deliberate sense of the Legislature had been recently recorded.

46. No definite action was taken. The cost of provisions was high during nearly the whole of 1840, and there was much distress in some districts. By January 1st, 1841, four workhouses had been opened and had 5,468 inmates therein. On January 1st of the following year there were thirty-seven, with 15,246 inmates. Distress again manifested itself in 1842, and it was considered necessary that some assistance should be afforded, and that the people should not be left entirely to their own resources as in previous years. Accordingly on the application of the Irish Government, coupled with an intimation of its desire to extend its aid, "in such a way as not to prejudice or embarrass the future proceedings of the Commissioners," the Assistant Commissioners in charge of the districts where the distress prevailed, were directed to give all the facilities in their power by making inquiries and furnishing information on the cases forwarded to them, preparatory to the distribution of such aid as the Government might think fit to bestow. The amount distributed by Government on this occasion in aid of local subscriptions was £3,448. By the end of June the weather had changed and the crops promised to be abundant. The markets immediately fell, and the scarcity, which had arisen rather from the holding back of supply than from any general deficiency, no longer existed. Commenting on this, Mr. Nicholls observes: "These facts appear to indicate that a portion of the distress which periodically takes place in Ireland may be referred to a cause, the operation of which is likely to be increased by grants of public money, for provisions are said to be sometimes accumulated in the stores of persons who will not bring them to market, under the expectation of being able to dispose of them at a famine price as soon as Government shall be induced, on the plea of distress, to make an advance of public money for the purpose."¹

47. The Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, dated May 1st, 1844, commences by stating that "the administration of relief of the poor in Ireland had been

¹ Nicholls' History of the Irish Poor Laws, p. 286.

attended with some difficulties during the past year, arising in a great measure from the political influences which had agitated that country." As early as 1842 there had been resistance to the payment of rates in several Unions. In a return to the House of Commons twenty-one Unions are named as having, down to January 1st, 1844, so far resisted the collection of the poor rates as to require the intervention of the constabulary or the military to enforce the collection. It appears from the Report issued in 1845 that, "the administration of the law in Ireland had proceeded satisfactorily upon the whole since the date of the last Report." The instances of resistance to the collection of the rates, or in which violence had occurred, were comparatively few.

48. The Annual Report published in 1846 represents the progress of the Poor Law during the previous twelve months as being on the whole satisfactory. All the workhouses originally proposed to be erected were then open, and the rates in course of collection, except in the two Unions of Clifden and Caherciveen, in each of which, however, the Guardians had taken steps for making a rate and opening the workhouse. The number of persons relieved had continued to increase during the year, indicating that the distress which had now become very general was beginning to press upon the workhouses. In the week ended December 27th, 1845, the number relieved was 41,218, whilst in the week ended March 31st, 1846, the number was 50,717. The expenditure for the year ended December 31st, 1845, was £316,026.

The great
Famine.

49. The great famine of 1846 and 1847 had already set in. The potato crop of 1845 had given promise of unusual abundance. The tubers were full grown and almost matured when, for the first time, about the middle of September, the potato blight appeared in districts near the sea-coast. The blight spread with great rapidity from field to field until it had affected the whole country. The tubers rotted both in the clay and after they had been gathered. It quickly became obvious that the greater portion of the crop would be unfit for human food. On October 18th, the Royal Agricultural Improvement Society of Ireland, under the chairmanship of Professor (afterwards Sir Robert) Kane, the well-known author of "The Industrial Resources of Ireland," after two days' deliberation, declared that 'on mature consideration of the evidence now before them it was advisable that the council should direct the attention of the Irish Government to the now undoubted fact that a great portion of the potato crop was seriously affected by the disease in question.' The Dublin Corporation held a meeting on October 28th, at which the Town Clerk stated that he had recently inspected the produce of eight or ten acres of potatoes, dug and housed in an apparently sound condition three weeks before, and that now it was difficult to find a sound potato amongst them; that all, however, was not gloom, for he had never seen so much corn safe and thatched in the haggards as he saw this year. As a result of this meeting a deputation including the Duke of Leinster, Lord Cloncurry, the Lord Mayor, O'Connell, Henry Grattan, and about twenty other gentlemen of position waited on the Lord-Lieutenant on November 3rd. They urged that the potato, the ordinary food of the whole mass of the poorer population, had perished; that the oat-crop and wheat-crop were unusually abundant; that there was at that moment, plenty of food in the country for the population; that that food was being exported to other countries; and that the Irish people would be stricken with famine unless the Government closed the ports of Ireland against the exportation of Irish grain.

Population.

50. The population of the country, which in 1821 did not exceed 6,712,144, had, year by year from that time, steadily increased, and in the middle of 1845 it was estimated at 8,295,061. Of this vast population, more than a third, (chiefly concentrated in the western and southern districts), were almost wholly dependent on potatoes for their daily food; this section of the inhabitants comprised :—

(1) Occupiers of cabins, with small farms of from 1 to 5 acres.

(2) Cottiers living on the land of farmers for whom they worked, with plots of from a rood to half an acre.

(3) Labourers with no fixed employment and no land, who lived in hovels or in corners of hovels rented by them and dependent for support on the patches of con-acre potato ground that they hired each year from some neighbouring farmer.

According to the Census of 1841, the number of farms exceeding 1 acre in size was 691,202, and of these 310,436 consisted of holdings of from 1 to 5 acres.

51. The Devon Commission in their Report of February 14th, 1845 (some months before the commencement of the famine period), in alluding to the condition of these small landholders, observe :—" It would be impossible to describe adequately the privation which they and their families habitually and patiently endure. It will be seen in the evidence that in many districts their only food is the potato, and their only beverage water ; that their cabins are seldom a protection against the weather ; that a bed or a blanket is a rare luxury, and that nearly in all cases a pig and manure heap constitute their only property."

52. The condition of the country had become so serious that the Government, under Sec. 119 of the Act of 1838, appointed Mr. Twisleton as a fourth Poor Law Commissioner. They did not, however, adopt the measure that had been pressed upon them of stopping the exportation of grain from Ireland.

53. The repeal of the Corn Laws was at that time under the consideration of Sir Robert Peel's Government, and the knowledge of the impending famine in Ireland accelerated his decision to remove restrictions upon the importation of food. In his judgment the best remedy was to open the ports of Ireland to foreign food, but this proposal was strongly objected to by members of the Cabinet, with the result that delays occurred in making the necessary arrangements for meeting the impending crisis. The Corn Laws were not repealed until the 26th June, and the controversies over their repeal most unquestionably interfered with the measures that would have been taken to relieve Ireland.

54. The Government purchased in America for £100,000 a cargo of Indian corn which arrived in Ireland in the spring of 1846. Food with which the people were familiar was sent away, and a strange food, of which they knew nothing, was given them. Distribution depôts were established at various points along the western seacoast under the direction of commissariat officers, with special depôts in charge of the constabulary and coastguards. The meal was sold from these depôts at a low price to relief committees, where such had been formed, and also to all who required it. In order to enable the people to purchase this new description of food, public works were established as had been done previously. An Act was passed enabling the magistrates and principal cess-payers to obtain advances of public money for this purpose—one half as a grant and the other half as a loan, to be repaid by the Barony out of the Grand Jury cess.¹

55. This Act was to expire on August 15th, 1846, when it was hoped the new potato would be available. Up to that date the amount expended was £733,372 of which £368,000 was in loans and £365,372 in grants. The sum raised by voluntary subscriptions was £98,000, thus making together £831,372² expended from other than Poor Law sources in the first year of the Irish famine in the relief of persons of whom many would otherwise have perished of absolute want. In the spring and summer there was in many districts acute suffering, but very few deaths from starvation occurred in this year.

56. The people looked forward with much hope to the potato crop of 1846. In the earlier part of the summer the crop appeared to be most healthy ; towards the close of July the potato fields were in full blossom and in every way so promising that the highest hopes of an abundant yield were entertained. But the blight had already touched the leaves and stems with tiny spots which expanded with alarming rapidity and destroyed the entire foliage. The tubers had only commenced to form, and were not larger than beans or nuts ; besides, as they were quite immature they were utterly unfit for food, and brought disease on the unhappy people who satisfied with them the cravings of hunger. This second failure of the potato crop, coming immediately after a year of acute distress and wide-spread want, proved to be one of the greatest calamities with which any nation has ever been stricken.

¹ *Vide* foot note on p. 6.

² Sir Charles E. Trevelyan, Finance Secretary to the Treasury, in his " Irish Crisis."

57. The Annual Report of the English Poor Law Commissioners, issued in 1847 (the last in which any reference is made to Ireland), describes very fully the effects consequent on the potato disease of the previous autumn. From inquiries made by the Commissioners it appeared that distress was already visible or apprehended in more than 2,000 different localities in Ireland. They observe:—"The fearful prospect held out by these returns was such as led us to consider with great anxiety in what manner the laws in force for the relief of the poor in Ireland could be made to operate as beneficially and effectually as possible. The power of affording relief from the poor rates being limited by law to accommodation in workhouses, it was manifest that in a widespread and overwhelming state of distress like that anticipated, such a power could be relied on only to a small extent for relieving the destitution of the people, and that the comprehensive remedial measures adopted by Her Majesty's Government, in the establishment of a general system of public works, and the organisation of relief committees, were to be looked to as the principal means of contending with the calamity."

Attempt to introduce Outdoor Relief.

58. The Guardians of several Unions had previously attempted to introduce a system of outdoor relief by giving food daily on the workhouse premises. The Commissioners opposed the proposal:—

(1) Because it was contrary to the intention of the Legislature, when passing the Irish Poor Relief Act.

(2) Because the financial condition of the Unions, with few exceptions, would not enable them to defray from their own resources the expenses which the new system would involve.

(3) Because the system, if introduced at all, would lead to abuse and confusion unless accompanied by checks and precautions which the existing state of the law did not enable the Commissioners to adopt.

Labour Rate Act, 1846.

59. Before Parliament rose on August 28th, 1846, it passed, without opposition, the Labour Rate Act, 9 & 10 Vict., c. 107 to provide against the impending famine. This Act abolished the grants that had been given in the first half of the year 1846, and made the whole expense of supplying food to the people during the remainder of the year 1846, and up to September, 1847, a local charge, the Treasury lending the money at 5 per cent. per annum, to be repaid in half-yearly instalments not less than four and not exceeding twenty. The loans were secured on and were to be repaid by the cess raised by the Grand Juries in the Baronies. Further, the labour rate was to be raised not after the manner of the Grand Jury cess, but with the legal incidence of the poor rate by which the landlord was liable for the whole rate on holdings valued at or under £4, and for half the rate on holdings valued over that amount. The burden of feeding a starving population was thus thrown exclusively on the owners and occupiers of land. The Government censured them severely for not doing their duty, but the task was entirely beyond their powers. There were over three millions of people to be fed, and the total rental of the land of Ireland was £10,000,000.

The Policy of the Government.

60. Up to this period the Irish people had been fed almost exclusively on the food grown by themselves—the surplus of which they exported. There was very little trade in provisions, and in whole districts of the country there was no provision dealer. The Government thought that the best method of meeting the total failure of the potato crop was to trust to high prices acting as an inducement to shippers and dealers to import and distribute food locally. To encourage the movement of food through private enterprise they declined to order food supplies from abroad, and to stimulate the Irish dealer the Government kept their depots closed whenever he appeared upon the scene. But the country was not sufficiently developed, either in its means of internal transport, or in the habits of its dealers and peasants, to be able to improvise or develop such a method of supply. It is the method under which lately the Indian Government with success have met drought and famine over areas of great size and affecting many millions of persons. But it failed in Ireland in 1846-7. Indian meal, notwithstanding,

the abolition of all protective duties, reached almost prohibitive prices. On December 30th, 1846, quotations were :—"Cork, Indian meal, ex-ship £17 10s. per ton : Limerick, £18 10s. to £19 per ton. Demand excessive."¹ The retail price of Indian meal in Ireland has fluctuated from £5 to £8 per ton for the last 50 years.

61. Under the Labour Rate Act enormous numbers of persons were employed on the public works, at the average wage of 8½d. per day. The wage was insufficient to buy Indian meal to satisfy the cravings of hunger of a whole family, and in many cases no meal or other food had reached the district, so that people in some instances perished for want of food though they had money. During the closing months of 1846, and the early months of 1847, the number of deaths was appalling. The burial of the dead became a matter of the greatest difficulty. The dead lay unburied in some instances for eight or ten days. In the most stricken districts a large "pit" was dug, the corpse was placed coffinless therein, and a little sawdust thrown over it, until the pit had received its full complement of dead, when it was covered in and another opened. Those famine "pits" are still clearly recognisable in graveyards in the south and west of Ireland. Deaths from Starvation.

62. The numbers on the relief works went on increasing week after week during the months of October, November and December. According to the Board of Works' series of Blue Books, in the month of December, works were open in every county in Ireland, affording employment to more than 300,000 persons, and on the 26th of that month the figure was 398,000. In a Memorandum of the Board of Works to Sir Randolph Routh, the head of the Commissariat Department, dated December 17th, it is stated that the number employed was about 350,000, while the number on the relief lists was 500,000, so that 150,000 persons representing a population of at least half a million, were still without relief. Number on Relief Works.

63. In January, 1847, it was announced that Government intended to put an end to the public works and to substitute another mode of relief, administered in a direct form on the principle of the Poor Law, and the Act 10 & 11 Vict., c. 7, commonly known as "the Soup Kitchen Act," was accordingly passed on the 26th February, 1847. This Act directed that a relief committee, consisting of the magistrates, a clergyman of each persuasion, the Poor Law Guardian, and the three highest ratepayers should be constituted in each electoral division, and that a finance committee of four gentlemen of character and knowledge of business, should be formed to control the expenditure in each Union. Inspecting officers were also to be appointed, and a central commission in Dublin was to superintend and control the working of the whole system. Sir John Burgoyne was the Chairman of this Commission and Mr. Twisleton, Poor Law Commissioner, was a member. The other members were Mr. Redington, Colonel Jones and Colonel McGregor. Loans under the Act were to cease after September 30th, 1847. The expense incurred was to be defrayed out of the poor rates, and when these proved insufficient they might be reinforced by Government loans, to be repaid by rates subsequently levied. But no loan was to be made until the inspecting officer had certified that the Guardians had passed a resolution for making the rate upon which the loan was to be secured. Such were the chief provisions of the Act, but grants were also made in aid of the rates in the poorest Unions, and when private subscriptions were raised the Government made donations to an equal amount. The liability of the ratepayers would, it was considered, operate as a check to undue expenditure. The test applied consisted in requiring the personal attendance of all who needed relief, (excepting only the sick and impotent poor and children under the age of nine), and that the relief should be given in food, in portions sufficient to maintain health and strength.² In July, 1847, the system reached its highest point; 3,020,712 persons then received separate rations, of whom 2,265,534 were adults and 755,178 were children. This was the second year in which upwards of three million people had been fed "out of the hands of the magistrate" in Ireland, but it was now done more effectively than at first. The expenses of this great undertaking amounted to £1,557,212, a moderate sum in comparison with the extent of Temporary Relief Act 10 and 11 Vict. c. 7.

¹ Letter of Commissary-General Hewetson, dated Limerick, December, 30th, 1846.

² The Commission, after consultation with the Board of Health, recommended the following scale for general guidance: For all over nine years, either 1½ lb. of bread, 1 lb. of biscuits, 1 lb. of flour or meal, or 1 quart of soup. All under nine to receive one-half this scale, and it was further enjoined that as far as practicable the food should be issued in a cooked form, both as a check on abuse and as being more economical—a recommendation very generally acted on.

the service performed, and in which performance the machinery of the Poor Law Unions was found to afford most important aid.

64. The entire amount advanced by Government in 1846 and 1847 toward the relief of distress was £7,132,268, of which £3,377,529 was a grant, the remainder to be repaid within ten years, in addition to which large sums were contributed by the British Relief Association, the Society of Friends and other organisations.

End of the
Famine.

65. The potato crop of 1847, and the other crops were good and plentiful. The shortage of food continued no longer. The famine was over, but the poverty and demoralisation arising from that dreadful upheaval were protracted in a diminishing degree for the next few years, and it was during this period that the strain on the Poor Law organisation became greatest.

THE IRISH POOR LAW COMMISSIONERS, 1847-1872.

Irish Poor Law
Commissioners.

66. These Commissioners were created by the Act 10 & 11 Vict., c. 90, of July 22nd, 1847, it being deemed "expedient that the control of the administration of the laws for the relief of the poor in Ireland should be wholly separated from the control of the administration of the laws for the relief of the poor in England." Mr. Twisleton, one of the English Commissioners, who had been acting in Ireland, was continued, being appointed Chief Commissioner; the other Commissioners were the Chief Secretary and the Under-Secretary for Ireland, aided by an Assistant Commissioner who, in the absence of the Chief Commissioner, was invested with his powers and duties. The Legislature had in the preceding month passed the Poor Relief Extension Act, 10 & 11 Vict., c. 31, which gave all destitute persons a claim to relief, and further empowered the Guardians in the case of certain specified classes to afford relief either in or out of the workhouse.

Out-door Relief
first authorized.

The pressure on
the Poor Law
Organization.

67. The functions devolving on the Central Authority and the Poor Law organisation at this time contrasted in a very marked manner with what had been contemplated when the Act of 1838 was passed. On July 3rd, 1847, in addition to those relieved in workhouses 3,020,712 destitute poor persons received relief in cooked food under the provisions of the 10 & 11 Vict., c. 7, apart from the relief afforded through the agency of the British Relief Association and other charitable organisations.

68. When the Irish Poor Law Commissioners came into office the relief afforded through these channels had practically ceased, and the Commissioners found themselves face to face with the entire responsibility of providing for the relief of the poor, through the machinery of the Poor Law.

Out-door Relief
to the Able-
bodied.

69. The workhouses being then in most instances quite full and in some cases overcrowded, the Poor Law Commissioners were obliged early in the winter of 1847-8 to issue orders authorising outdoor relief to the able-bodied classes.

Extension of
Workhouse Ac-
commodation.

70. During this period the policy adopted by the local bodies was to enlarge as speedily as possible the workhouse accommodation—a policy which met with the fullest encouragement and support of the Central Authority. Generally speaking, additional room was obtained either by the erection of timber sheds on the workhouse grounds, or more commonly by hiring unused stores and other buildings as auxiliary workhouses. In many cases the buildings thus procured were ill-adapted and were, moreover, so frequently overcrowded as to become absolutely injurious to the health of the inmates.

71. The Commissioners in their Second Annual Report observe:—"A very important feature in the administration of relief during the present season is the large extent of additional workhouse accommodation provided by the Boards of Guardians throughout the country. This has taken place under the influence of a strong and growing conviction that the abuses incidental to outdoor relief are not to be contended with by any administrative agency when such relief is conducted on a large scale, and that a system of workhouse relief is preferable not alone in ordinary times but in seasons of the severest distress. Thus building after building has been hired in aid of the workhouses originally built, and the entire accommodation, which was originally calculated at 100,000, and which during the year 1847-1848 was increased to 150,000, has during the present season been

extended so as to contain more than 250,000 inmates.” The Commissioners add that they rested their hope of contending successfully with the difficulties before them on the large extent of workhouse accommodation which had been provided, and on the force of opinion which they believed to be prevalent in favour of administering relief to the poor as far as practicable in the workhouse.

72. It appears from the Annual Report published in 1848 that twenty-five Unions at that time gave relief only in the workhouse, and it is stated that “ the result of the adherence to an exclusive system of workhouse relief has been in all points satisfactory.”

73. Section 10 of the Act 10 Vict., c. 31 (1847), laid down that no person in occupation of more than quarter of an acre of land could be deemed to be destitute, and that it was not therefore lawful for the Guardians to relieve such person either in or out of the workhouse. This policy apparently had the concurrence of the Poor Law Commissioners, for in their Annual Report for 1848 they observe :—“ The statutory limitation of relief to the very lowest class of the occupiers of land and the regulation contained in our orders, prohibiting outdoor relief to any person in employment, furnish marked lines for the guidance and restraint of the Guardians and their officers, which, if duly observed, as for the most part we believe they have been, must have greatly facilitated discrimination as to the proper objects for relief ; while the workhouse system, and, where the workhouse was full, the labour test, have both been applied with successful results to cases of doubtful or pretended destitution . . . we are satisfied that the bulk of the expenditure of the Unions in outdoor as well as in indoor relief has been well applied, and that the exceptions to this general rule are much more rare than we had reason in the commencement of our proceedings to expect.”

Prohibition of Relief to Land-holders—the “Gregory Clause.”

The prohibition of poor relief to occupiers of land was repealed by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1862 so far as it related to relief in the workhouse, and it now applies only to outdoor relief:

th 74. In the month of July, 1849, the number relieved under the Poor Law attained e maximum. There were then :—

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---------|-----------|
| In workhouses | - | - | - | - | - | 221,583 |
| On outdoor relief (under Sec. 1) | - | - | - | - | 492,503 | |
| On outdoor relief (under Sec. 2) | - | - | - | - | 291,864 | 784,367 |
| | | | | | | <hr/> |
| | | | | | | 1,005,950 |

75. The poor rates consequently were entirely inadequate to meet the emergency, Rates-in-aid. and funds were supplemented by rates-in-aid over Ireland (authorised by the Rate-in-Aid Act, 1849), by unappropriated balances of fines and penalties transferred under the Act, 15 & 16 Vict. c. 68, to the credit of rate-in-aid fund, and by the balance of the funds in the hands of the British Relief Association.

A rate-in-aid of 6d. in the £ was made over Ireland in June, 1849, and another of 2d. in the £ in December, 1850. The aggregate amount of the two rates-in-aid (1849-1850) was £421,990, and the amount of fines and penalties transferred under 15 & 16 Vict., c. 68, was £12,375

76. Although the poor rates were supplemented from extraneous sources during the six years succeeding 1847, the distress was met from the autumn of that year entirely by the administration of the Irish Poor Relief Acts, through the agency of the Boards of Guardians. In many Unions, however, the Guardians were unable to cope with the difficulties attending the management of the Unions, and in the years 1847-8-9, the Poor Law Commissioners found it necessary to dissolve thirty Boards and to appoint paid officers to discharge their duties.

77. The following table shows (1) the decline in the population consequent on the famine, (2) the diminution of the burden on the poor rates.

| Year. | ¹ Popula- tion. | Total expendi- ture. | In-main- tenance. | Outdoor relief expendi- ture. | Daily average number of workhouse inmates. | Daily average number of persons on outdoor relief. | Observations. |
|-------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|--|--|---|------------------------|
| | | £. | | £. | | | |
| 1845 | 8,295,061 | 280,946 | 159,828 | — | 36,497 | — | |
| 1846 | 8,287,848 | 351,068 | 224,519 | — | 42,807 | — | |
| 1847 | 8,025,274 | 717,713 | 516,307 | — | 83,283 | — | During the year 1848 |
| 1848 | 7,639,800 | 1,835,634 | 605,135 | 725,578 | 128,020 | — ² | £260,221 was received |
| 1849 | 7,256,314 | 2,141,228 | 731,587 | 667,297 | 193,650 | — ² | from grants in aid of |
| 1850 | 6,877,549 | 1,430,108 | 710,945 | 120,772 | 211,047 | 103,676 | rates. |
| 1851 | 6,514,473 | 1,102,771 | 692,941 | 11,398 | 217,388 | 8,559 | In 1849–1850 a sum of |
| 1852 | 6,336,889 | 937,556 | 517,455 | 4,917 | 166,855 | 3,227 | £421,990 was received |
| 1853 | 6,198,984 | 874,158 | 446,030 | 4,920 | 129,390 | 3,022 | from the rate-in-aid |
| 1854 | 6,083,183 | 849,859 | 463,858 | 3,715 | 95,197 | 1,617 | fund. |
| 1855 | 6,014,665 | 774,647 | 432,842 | 4,702 | 79,598 | 2,150 | In 1852 the medical |
| 1856 | 5,972,851 | 666,626 | 358,943 | 2,245 | 63,286 | 886 | charities expenditure |
| 1857 | 5,919,454 | 589,349 | 292,685 | 2,412 | 50,688 | 954 | appeared for the first |
| | | | | | | | time in the accounts. |

Decrease of
Population con-
sequent on the
Famine.

78. The Census Commissioners,³ after stating that the numerical decrease of the inhabitants between 1841 and 1851 amounted to 1,622,739, go on to remark:—"But this being merely the difference between the number of people in 1841 and 1851 without making any allowance for a natural and ordinary increase of population, conveys very inadequately, the effect of the visitation of famine and pestilence. . . . We found that the population on March 30th, 1851, would probably have numbered 9,018,799, instead of 6,522,385, and that consequently the loss of population between 1841 and 1851 may be computed at the enormous amount of 2,496,414 persons."

These figures show that two and a half millions of persons have to be accounted for. Of these, the number that died of starvation, and of fever and dysentery consequent on starvation, is estimated at over 1,000,000⁴.

Emigration.

Emigration which was very active during those years carried away the remainder. But disease followed them into the emigrant ships and even to their homes in their new country and about 20 per cent. of the emigrants died.⁴ The stream of emigration did not cease with the famine of 1847. For the next few years the volume rather tended to increase, as the people, unnerved by the experiences through which they had passed, were ready to grasp at the chance of employment offered by the rapid development of railway construction and industrial works in Great Britain, and by the promise of prosperity offered in Canada, the United States, and Australia.

79. After the recovery of the country from the effects of the famine, the years which followed were accompanied by great prosperity for the agricultural classes. Owing to the Crimean War the prices of hay and corn were abnormally high. Money was made rapidly and the rents were punctually paid. The ownership and occupation of Irish land were much sought after. It came to be regarded as good security for investors, and many smaller estates changed hands. Landlords had little difficulty in obtaining money on mortgage to clear off the liabilities they had incurred during the years of famine. Rents which were fixed at that time, and paid without difficulty and without protest, were afterwards regarded as oppressive, and led to much trouble during later years.

80. This period of prosperity was not of long duration, and, from time to time, up to the end of the seventies there were varying seasons of depression and prosperity, but

¹ Population as estimated at the middle of the year.
² Daily average number not ascertainable.
³ See Part VI. of the Report of the Census of Ireland for 1851, published 1856.
⁴ Thom's Almanack for 1853, p. 252. Dr. Stratten, in Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, quoted by Census Commissions for 1851 in page 305 of their Report on Tables of Deaths. Nicholls History of Irish Poor Law, p. 327 note. Sir Charles Trevelyan's "Irish Crisis."

the resources of the Poor Law were found adequate for the relief of all classes of the sick and destitute poor.

81. Two Acts of Parliament were passed during these years, each of which marks an epoch in the history of the Poor Law, viz., the Medical Charities Act of 1851, and the Local Government Board Act of 1872. By the Medical Charities Act, the office of Assistant Commissioner was abolished, and two Commissioners were appointed, one of whom was to be a practising Physician or Surgeon of not less than 7 years standing, to be entitled the Medical Commissioner. Under this Act the powers and duties of the Commissioners were to be executed under the hand and seal of the Chief Commissioner alone, or the two other Commissioners jointly. The Medical Charities Act provided complete machinery for supplying domiciliary medical relief in all parts of the country. Hitherto the sick had been able to obtain medical relief only in workhouse hospitals, in County infirmaries and as out-patients in numerous small dispensaries, some of which were established by the landlords, and gentry prior to 1800 and others under the Act of 1805.¹ But these dispensaries were badly equipped voluntary institutions, subsidised to a very limited extent by county cess. Medical advice was given gratuitously to all comers, but the supply of medicines was small, and the doctors paid domiciliary visits only to those patients who resided within a short distance of the dispensaries. For the bulk of the people there was no home medical relief, and this want was supplied by the Medical Charities Act. The Irish dispensary system is very fully described in the Memorandum on "Poor Law Medical Relief in Ireland," prepared and supplied to the Commission by the Medical Commissioner of the Local Government Board, which is printed in the Appendix, and while there are, no doubt, some abuses and irregularities incidental to its administration, it appears on the whole to have proved beneficent, and to have rendered medical relief accessible to the sick poor in every part of the country. We shall have some further remarks upon this system in a later chapter.

The second important Act to which we allude was the Local Government Board Act of 1872, which abolished the old Poor Law Commission and substituted the Local Government Board.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD FOR IRELAND, 1872.

82. The Board, consisting of the Chief Secretary as President, a Vice-President and three other Commissioners, one being *ex-officio*—the Under Secretary—was constituted by the Act 35 & 36 Vict., c. 69, which received the Royal assent on August 10th, 1872. This Act transferred to the new Board all the powers and duties of the former Commissioners, together with certain powers and duties of the Lord-Lieutenant, the Privy Council, and the Chief Secretary. Sir Alfred Power, who had succeeded Mr. Twisleton as Chief Commissioner in 1849, was appointed to the office of Vice-President. The powers of the Board continued to be exercisable by two Commissioners jointly down to the passing of the Local Government Act, 1898, which repealed that provision and required that acts of the Board should be done or executed by the President, the Under Secretary, or the Vice President, or by any person appointed by the President or Vice President to act on behalf of the Vice President.

83. The winter of 1879 was the commencement of an eventful period in the history of poor relief administration in Ireland. The distress of 1879-80.

So long as the occupiers of small holdings had been content to live on the produce of their land they had managed to find a means of subsistence. But the standard of living was rising on all sides; the people in the country villages spent more on their food and dress; the migratory labourers and American emigrants periodically revisiting their homes, introduced new ideas, and all this tended to raise the cost of living. Small shops sprung into existence all over the country, and the competition between the rival local traders resulted in credit being given to an extent which proved ruinous to the people. Rents fell into arrear, and the arrears of rent and shop debts gradually accumulated. These difficulties culminated in the autumn of 1879, when live stock

¹ 45 Geo. III., C. 111, secs. 3 & 4.

became almost unsaleable, and the potato crop was an almost total failure. Credit was suddenly withdrawn, and the traders being pressed for payment by the merchants, in turn pressed their customers, and thus the year 1880 opened in many parts of Ireland with a more hopeless prospect for the people than had ever faced them since the famine.

The Times on the January 16th, in a leading article, thus refers to the growing indebtedness of the Irish farmers, and discriminates between the condition of the occupiers of large and small holdings:—

“ We believe it cannot be doubted that during the recent period of comparative prosperity in Ireland, and partly, indeed, in consequence of the beneficial effect of the Land Act of 1870, which gave the smallest tenant a certain degree of ‘fixity of tenure,’ the credit system has been developed on an almost unparalleled scale among the Irish farming classes. They borrowed from the country banks, which have extended their rural business immensely within the past decade, from seed merchants and manure merchants, and from the ordinary retail shopkeepers, many of the latter being neither more nor less than petty usurers. The farmers with holdings of moderate proportions have been able, in spite of this increasing load of debt—almost as cruelly heavy as that under which the peasantry of India groan—to bear up against one bad year after another; but those who struggle to support families—too many of them large families—upon three or four acres apiece, have, it is said, at length utterly succumbed.”

84. During this memorable winter of 1879—80, distress, agrarian strife, and the operations of charitable committees, all combined to break down the Poor Law in the western unions, to abolish the workhouse test, and to bring about alternative measures of relief which were carried out upon a system wholly at variance with the first principles of the Poor Law as to the “eligibility” of those supported at the public expense. It is impossible to avoid controversial topics in referring to the history of this period, but we shall endeavour to touch on these subjects as lightly as possible, and only so far as may be necessary in order to throw a light on the difficulties in the working of the existing Poor Law in periods of agricultural depression and at the same time to support our argument for the reforms we shall advocate.

85. The Government, realizing that distress among the landholders was inevitable, had sought during the autumn to stimulate employment on land improvement by offering loans to landowners at a low rate of interest, but these terms were not taken advantage of to any appreciable extent in the poorest of the western districts, where the principal landowners were absentees, and where the distress and insolvency of the tenantry discouraged the idea of sinking money on speculative drainage and reclamation of estates.

The possibility of having to depend solely upon the ordinary Poor Law to meet the distress in some districts seems to have been foreseen, but past experience had given the Government every reason to believe that it was not only safe but politic to make the people understand that if they failed to support themselves they must accept the measures which the law had provided for their relief. For the previous 30 years, in seasons of prosperity and depression alike, the provisions of the ordinary Poor Law and the resources of the Unions had proved equal to every strain. The workhouses had an ample margin of vacant space and even if they had to be utilized to the full limits of their accommodation outdoor relief could then be given to the able-bodied under Section 2 of the Poor Relief Act of 1847.¹

Reluctance to
authorize outdoor
relief.

86. It was accordingly considered that to authorize the Guardians to suspend the workhouse test and to afford outdoor relief—for which no efficient test could be devised—to all classes of poor, would be a perilous experiment, and one which the circumstances of the case did not at first appear to justify.

87. This was the chief reason which operated against the extension of outdoor relief to able-bodied and landholders at the outset of the distress. But there were other circumstances which tended to support the conviction that the Poor Law would be adequate to provide for the needs of the destitute. The distress agitation was so closely interwoven with the agrarian disturbances which preceded the Land Act of 1881, that the Government had some difficulty in distinguishing between actual and simulated distress, and in realising the desperate straits to which the people were reduced in some localities. It is

¹ *Vide* p. 50. Sec. 2 does not enable outdoor relief to be given to landholders. For this class the workhouse is alone available under the ordinary law. But the wives and children of landholders, if destitute, are eligible for outdoor relief under Sec. 2.

necessary to explain that, shortly before this date, the people, heavily in arrear with their rents, had thrown themselves eagerly into the Land League movement which was started by Michael Davitt, believing that the organisation of the League alone stood between them and eviction. The campaign against the landlords was fierce and violent, and it seems to have been strongly urged on the Government that the cry of distress which was raised was, to some extent, a ruse on the part of the Land League politicians against payment of rent, rather than a genuine appeal for the relief of destitution.

This theory thus found constant expression in some of the Dublin newspapers; for instance the *Daily Express* wrote :—

“It is unfortunate that the truth has hitherto been enveloped in so much exaggeration and fiction that its actual dimensions could not be seen, and there was a natural tendency in the minds of even the most benevolent persons to disbelieve it. Those who magnified the general depression, and represented months ago that the country was on the brink of a terrible famine, showed only that they were impatient to denounce the British Government, and that their object was to make political capital out of the crisis, and not to avert the horrors which they affected to deplore. The cry of actual distress was drowned in the clamour of exaggeration and pretence.”

88. It should also be here stated that the published reports of the Local Government Board Inspectors, made after the harvest of 1879, seem to have been curiously conflicting as to the extent of probable demand for relief which might be anticipated. It was not easy to make a reliable forecast as so much depended upon the action of the shop-keepers and landlords. However, the Government, after a careful review of the situation, appear to have faced the winter with full confidence in the adequacy of the Poor Law to provide for the relief of all in distress who failed to find employment on the land improvement works, and on the 14th November we find the Local Government Board warning Boards of Guardians by circular of the necessity for being prepared for possible contingencies and for making “due provision beforehand of ample stores of bedding and clothing to meet any degree of pressure on the workhouse which is likely to occur.” They were also requested to give instructions to have the unoccupied wards of the workhouses thoroughly cleansed and whitewashed, and placed in every respect in habitable order.

Conflicting reports as to the state of the country.

Whether it would have been possible to have successfully carried out the policy of rigid adherence to the principles of the Poor Law if the distress had not been subsequently complicated by the land war, it is difficult to say; but there can be no doubt that the charitable organizations, which spread the tale of “suffering and misery” to the ends of the earth in their appeals for funds, convinced the people that it was the duty of the civilized world to keep them out of the workhouse, and made the adoption of the Government’s policy difficult to defend and almost impossible to enforce.

89. Seldom was the Irish Government called upon to face a more painful and perplexing situation than that which presented itself as the winter passed. Rents were almost everywhere in arrear, and many of the landlords, pressed by their mortgagees and creditors, were making strenuous efforts to collect by distraint or any process of law open to them. The Government were in the awkward predicament of being obliged to send police to protect the civil officers in making seizures and serving ejectment decrees in districts where the people were known to be in the direst straits.

Gunboats were hurrying round the coast depositing cargoes of food stuffs, and then returning post haste to carry police and sheriffs to those same localities on eviction work. While the Carraroe eviction riots were at their worst in January, and a pitched battle between the police and the people armed with scythes and pitchforks was raging, the gunboat “Goshawk” was loading up at Galway with Indian meal from the Charitable Committees to enable these same Carraroe people to subsist in the homes from which it was sought to evict them.

The daily papers of that time gave a remarkable picture of a people alternately succoured by relief operations and terrified by the armed forces of the Crown. The *Daily Express* of January 13th, which reports a grant of bedding given to Oughterard Union by the Duchess of Marlborough’s Committee, states in another column, in referring to the same Union, that ;—

“It will be seen that there is some expectation that firearms will be used against the police in serving writs near Maam to-day. This ought to be rendered impossible. The people have no need of firearms, and should not be allowed to carry them. As to scythes, reaping-hooks, or spades, of course their use cannot be prohibited, but pikes should be as unlawful as guns. Indeed it is difficult to see for what lawful purpose a pike could be required.”

Loans to County
Authorities for
roads, bridges, &c.

90. About the middle of January the Government, finding that the loans to landholders¹ did not fulfil their expectations, and alarmed at the growing distress, adopted a further means of affording employment, and authorized loans to County Authorities for roads, bridges and other baronial works.²

The money spent on these works as a means of relief, if the system could have been promptly and successfully applied in the western districts, might have tided over the distress; but it was unsatisfactory and slow in operation, and was thus described in the *Saturday Review*:—

“The obvious objection to this arrangement is that it will need time that can ill be spared to bring it into operation. The Guardians are to represent the existence of distress to the Local Government Board; the Local Government Board are to report to the Lord Lieutenant that the representation is correct; the Commissioners of Public Works are to consider what works are needed in the district from which the representation comes; the Lord Lieutenant is to convene an extraordinary meeting of the Baronial Sessions in which the distressed union is situated, and to present a schedule of works which have been approved. The Guardians, the County Surveyor, or any two cesspayers may then make application for their execution

“This is an excellent system for enabling as many public departments as possible to take part in the interesting work of relief ; but if the object is to find food for people who are starving, it is certainly open to the objection of being a little tedious. If it is worth while to send relief at all, it would be wiser to send it while those it is designed to benefit are still alive.”

Failure of Baronial Works.

91. The result of the failure of Baronial works as a means of affording immediate relief where it was suddenly and urgently required was that, with the workhouse discountenanced and outdoor relief debarred by law to landholders, the charitable funds alone bore the chief burden of relieving the destitute.

92. But the charities were irresponsible and not in themselves sufficient, and towards the middle of January the English and Irish Press began to cry out at what, in some quarters, was erroneously deemed to be apathy on the part of the sorely perplexed Irish Government.

The Times on January 16th expressed the opinion that:—

"Those who know Ireland best believe that more extensive measures than any which private charity can compass will have to be adopted under the control and initiative of Government."

The *Saturday Review* on January 17th wrote:—

“It must not be forgotten that it is the Government that will, in the long run, be held responsible if Irish distress passes into Irish starvation. Even in India, where the principle of a Poor Law has never been formally recognised, the Government undertook to keep the people alive, and, so far as they are not relieved of this duty by others, they cannot do less for the people of one of the three United Kingdoms. . . . In cases of exceptional scarcity, where vast numbers of persons have to be kept alive for long periods, it is impossible to forego outdoor relief. There are not workhouses enough to hold the people who have to be fed, and it would not be expedient to force them into them even if there were. . . . The fear is not that the Government will refuse to give aid to the distressed districts, but that they will not give it until the dimensions of the distress have become almost unmanageable.”

The *Freeman's Journal* Special Commissioner writing from Connemara on January 26th expressed the same view, but in somewhat less guarded language:—

"It will be murder, reckless wholesale murder, if the Government delay any longer to intervene in districts like this."

Outdoor relief to
the able-bodied
authorized.

93. The Government bowed its head to the storm, and by the middle of February outdoor relief was authorized to all destitute persons, whether in occupation of land or not.

94. Fortunately the charitable funds averted the pressure on the rates to a considerable extent. But the failure of the Poor Law in the western Unions had been admitted, the first principles of relief administration had been set aside, and though an effort was made to recover the lost ground in 1882, it was not followed up, and the workhouse test was never again rigidly enforced in periods of agricultural depression. The provision enabling outdoor relief to be given to all classes of destitute poor in times of exceptional distress has now become a permanent statutory enactment.

Steps taken by Government to meet the distress.

95. The steps taken by the Government to meet the distress were authorised by the Relief of Distress Acts, the Seed Supply Act, and the Local Government Board

¹ *Ibid* p. 25.

2 *Vide* note on p. 6.

(Ireland) Amendment Act. A sum of £1,500,000 was allocated from the surplus of the Irish Church Fund, and was applied to the following purposes :—

(1) Loans for land improvement were granted to landowners, repayable in thirty-five years, with interest at 1 per cent., the payments in respect of principal and interest not to commence for two years.

(2) Loans were granted to sanitary authorities, repayable in different periods according to the nature and probable duration of the work, with interest at 1 per cent. (payments not to commence for two years).

(3) Loans were granted for baronial works, such as road-making, repayable in fifteen years at 1 per cent. (payments not to commence for two years).

(4) Loans were granted for arterial drainage, with interest at 1 per cent. (payments not to commence for two years).

(5) Loans were granted to Boards of Guardians for relief purposes, repayable in twelve years, with interest at 1 per cent. (payments not to commence for two years).

(6) Grants were made to Boards of Guardians for relief purposes.

96. The following shows the amounts advanced or granted on the foregoing terms :—

| | £ |
|---|------------|
| Landowners - - - - - | 898,512 |
| Sanitary authorities - - - - - | 38,535 |
| For baronial works - - - - - | 270,787 |
| For arterial drainage - - - - - | 6,136 |
| Loans to Boards of Guardians - - - - - | 11,384 |
| Grants to Boards of Guardians - - - - - | 19,069 |
| | <hr/> |
| | £1,244,423 |

Advances were also made to Boards of Guardians for relief purposes, repayable in ten years at 3½ per cent. interest, and a sum of £4,900 was so advanced.

97. The two principal relief Committees were the Duchess of Marlborough's Committee, and the Mansion House Committee. The former expended in relief about £93,694, and in supplying seed to poor persons about £36,983, making a total of about £130,677 ; and the latter in relief, £173,192, and in seed, £933—total, £174,125. A sum of over £20,000 was also voted by the Canadian Parliament, and was disbursed by a Committee in grants for piers, boats and gear to fishermen on the Western Coast of Ireland. Considerable sums were also expended in relief from other funds, such as the Land League Fund, the *New York Herald* Fund, and the Philadelphia Fund.

98. Further aid was afforded at this time to the unemployed poor in the distressed Unions by the expenditure of money on piers and harbours in the West of Ireland. A committee was formed to inquire and report as to the places in certain distressed Unions at which a sum of £60,000 could be best expended with advantage in the building and erection of piers and other landing places, for the purpose of providing work for unskilled labour where it was urgently required, and of permanently extending and developing the deep-sea fisheries. The final Report of that committee, dated May 9th, 1881, shows that piers and landing places were constructed or harbours improved at thirty different places on the coast. The total cost of these works was, as already stated, £60,000, of which the Government contributed by grant £45,000, £8,500 was received from the Canadian Committee, and the balance of £6,500 was provided by local and other contributions.

99. The Relief of Distress Act which authorized outdoor relief to landholders and able-bodied persons came into force on March 15th, 1880, but as stated in paragraph 93, the Government in February authorized the Local Government Board, if satisfied of the necessity of anticipating the sanction of Parliament to this measure, to permit Guardians of any Union where exceptional distress prevailed, to grant outdoor relief to those classes, and the expenditure thus incurred was afterwards allowed and confirmed by an indemnity clause in this Act. The power to grant this exceptional relief expired in March of the following year.

The Seed Supply
Act of 1880.

100. The Seed Supply (Ireland) Act, 1880, made provision for the loan of money to Boards of Guardians for the purpose of supplying seed potatoes and other seeds for sale to occupiers and cultivators valued at and under £15, who were, through poverty, unable to procure a supply for themselves. The net amount of loans advanced under this Statute in 153 Unions was £598,306, of which £588,912 was repaid by the Unions. The balance £9,394, due by nine Unions was subsequently extinguished by the Public Works Loan Act, 1899.

The Distress
of 1882-3.

101. Distress again appeared in the winter of 1882-3, but inasmuch as the Land Act of 1881 had passed, and the credit of the people with the traders was improved by their fixity of tenure, and by the relief afforded by the Arrears of Rent Act, the distress was not general, nor was it so acute as in 1879-80. The Government, mindful of the abuses and demoralisation which had accompanied the distribution of outdoor relief and charitable funds in 1880, without any systematic inquiry or test, accordingly considered that an effort must be made to revert to the principles of the Poor Law, and to restore the self-reliance of the people, which had been undermined towards the end of the season of 1880 by a superabundance of charity.

102. This policy, and the reason for its adoption, is thus set out in a letter from the Under-Secretary for Ireland to the Local Government Board, on the 9th December, 1882 :—

“Various proposals, all of them involving expenditure of public money, have been submitted to His Excellency and the Local Government Board as to the means by which the distress should be met, the most prominent of these being the establishment of works to give employment to poor persons in the districts where want exists or is apprehended.

“Her Majesty’s Government have given careful consideration to these methods of affording relief, but they are not prepared to adopt any of them, as they are satisfied by experience that relief works are not only extravagant and demoralising in their effects, but they often fail to aid the most necessitous.

“The Government have, after full consideration of all the circumstances, determined to rely solely upon the administration of relief through the ordinary channel provided by law, viz.:—the Boards of Guardians, as they are satisfied that no machinery so efficient as that of the Guardians can be devised for the distribution of relief.

* * * * *

“You are of course, aware, that under the existing Poor Law Acts relief cannot be given in any Union to able-bodied men unless the workhouse is full, or, by reason of fever or infectious disease, is unfit for the reception of poor persons, and by this principle Her Majesty’s Government have determined to abide.

* * * * *

“Her Majesty’s Government are fully aware of the great objection entertained by many poor persons to go into the workhouse; but it cannot be contended that persons who are unable to procure for themselves the necessaries of life should be allowed to determine the manner in which public relief is to be afforded, nor can any just ground of complaint exist if to every destitute person the means shall be readily accessible of obtaining effectual relief.”

103. The Government decided, however, that where the Local Government Board were satisfied that it was impossible to collect the rate requisite to meet the temporary pressure on the resources of the Union, they would empower Guardians to borrow such sums as might be necessary, and afterwards obtain legislative sanction.

Emigration.

104. It was further considered that the only permanent remedy was to emigrate a considerable proportion of the people from the congested districts, and to protect the ratepayers from undue taxation by the firm administration of the existing Poor Laws. The policy was to make the poor understand that while all who were destitute could obtain shelter, food and clothing in the workhouse, the able-bodied classes must not hope, so long as there was workhouse accommodation available, to obtain outdoor relief and live in their own homes at the expense of the country. The struggle of the people to keep out of the workhouse was a very severe one, involving much privation, and the statistics of pauperism showed only a small percentage of increase during the spring months. Although the workhouses were not in any case filled, the effect of this decision on the part of the Government was to throw a very serious responsibility on the relieving officers who had to administer provisional relief in cases of sudden and urgent necessity to an extent which was never contemplated by the 7th Section of the Poor Relief Act of 1847. A sum of £150,000 was granted under the Arrears of Rent (Ireland) Act, 1882 and the Act 46 & 47 Vict., c. 43, for the purpose of aiding emigration. £120,000 of this sum was utilised, and assistance thereby given to 23,546 persons to emigrate.

Landowners were also offered facilities for obtaining loans under the Land Im- Loans to provement Acts, with a view to bringing employment within reach of the homes of landowners. the poor.]

105. On turning to the Union expenditure during these periods of distress it will be observed that in 1880 the indoor relief increased from £443,936 to £481,710. It fluctuated during the five following years, and then dropped to £381,194 in 1886.

During the same period the outdoor relief with occasional fluctuation continued to steadily increase as will be seen by the following :—

| | £ |
|------|-----------|
| 1879 | - 117,275 |
| 1880 | - 153,586 |
| 1881 | - 182,049 |
| 1882 | - 180,575 |
| 1883 | - 186,064 |
| 1884 | - 181,210 |
| 1885 | - 183,298 |
| 1886 | - 235,500 |

106. Distress again appeared in 1886, but the Government were unwilling to rely The Distress again entirely upon the Poor Law and enforce its rigid administration as in 1882-3, of 1886. and under the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act, which received the Royal Assent on May 10th, 1886, outdoor relief to the able-bodied and landholders again became permissible. By Sec. 2 of that Act the Local Government Board were empowered to authorise Boards of Guardians of any Union to administer outdoor relief in food or fuel for a limited time to poor persons under such conditions as they might see fit to prescribe. The third section authorised grants not exceeding £20,000 in all to be made to the six Unions named in the Schedule of the Act, viz., Belmullet, Clifden, Galway, Oughterard, Swineford and Westport, to aid in defraying the cost of the exceptional relief so afforded.

The total expenditure incurred under this Act in the six Unions mentioned was £36,699, of which £20,000 was defrayed out of the grant before referred to. It appears that notwithstanding all the efforts which had been made by the Local Government Board at the time to cause this exceptional relief to be judiciously dispensed, the duties of the Boards of Guardians in most of the Unions referred to were performed in such a manner as to give rise to grave abuse. In one week (that ended May 22nd) 48 per cent. of the whole population of these districts were relieved. A Commission was subsequently appointed to inquire into the matter and their Report was presented in 1887.

107. In 1887 the Local Government Board addressed a circular to Boards of Guardians calling their attention to the fact that the average daily number of persons on outdoor relief had increased from 926 in 1856 to 54,434 in 1885, exclusive of the orphan and deserted children boarded-out, notwithstanding the fact that the population had decreased by more than a million during the same period. In the opinion of the Board this great increase had been principally brought about by the lax and unsound system under which the Poor Law was administered by Guardians, in many parts of the country. The Board expressed a hope that Guardians would give the matter their earnest consideration and endeavour to lessen the charges upon the ratepayers “by administering the Poor Laws on a better and more sound principle than obtains in so many parts of Ireland at present.”

108. Owing to the deficient harvest of 1890 and to the low prices of stock and the The Distress of bad season in England for the migratory labourers the Government had once again to 1890-1. deal with the problem of exceptional distress, during the winter and spring of 1890-91.

Light Railways
Act.

109. It was then felt that to secure immunity for these poor districts from the disastrous effects of the constantly recurring failures of the potato crop some measures for the permanent amelioration of the people should be undertaken, and the Chief Secretary of the day, Mr. A. J. Balfour, accordingly determined to open up these districts by railways and to take measures to develop their resources.

Congested
Districts Board.

110. The Congested Districts Board was constituted under Sec. 34 of the Act 54 & 55 Vict., c. 48, 1891, with an income of £41,250 at its disposal.

The powers entrusted to the Board embrace :—

- (1) Agricultural development.
- (2) Forestry.
- (3) Breeding of live stock and poultry.
- (4) Sale of seed potatoes and seed oats.
- (5) Amalgamation of small holdings.
- (6) Migration.
- (7) Emigration.
- (8) Fishing and matters subservient to fishing.
- (9) Weaving and spinning.
- (10) Any other suitable industries.

Relief works
opened.

111. It was obvious, that many years must elapse before these remedial measures would bear fruit and the Government again decided to open relief works at the expense of the State, and thus to afford employment to persons who were ascertained to be in distress. Works were opened in twenty-three Unions situated chiefly in the west and south-west of Ireland, and in addition to the number relieved by such means, the construction of light railways under the Railways (Ireland) Act, 53 & 54 Vict., c. 52, already mentioned which was passed that year, afforded employment at high wages to a very large section of the population in the poorest localities, who would otherwise have been applicants for relief. A charitable fund was also inaugurated by the Lord-Lieutenant and the Chief Secretary in aid of the occupiers of small holdings who were infirm and unable to work, and by this means the rates were relieved of the support of a large class of persons who, in previous years of scarcity, were amongst the first to require assistance. The expenditure on relief works in that year was £224,322.

Seed Supply
Acts of 1890
and 1891.

112. Seed Supply Acts were also passed in 1890 and 1891 under which loans to the extent of £286,635 were advanced to Boards of Guardians for the purchase of seed for the occupiers of small holdings, to be repaid by them in two yearly instalments.

The Distress of
1894-5.

113. In 1894 there was a partial failure of the potato crop, and relief works were organised in the distressed Unions on the same system as in 1891. As this measure of relief might not be applicable to all cases of distress, occurring amongst the people, the provisions of the Relief of Distress Act were re-enacted suspending the operation of the quarter acre clause, and a Seed Supply Act was again introduced.

The Distress of
1898.

114. In 1897-1898 the potato crop once more failed, and the worst effects of the failure were, as a rule, felt in the Unions which were in a financially embarrassed condition.

115. Previous operations for the relief of distress had shown that works carried out by Government independently of Boards of Guardians, who are by law responsible for the care of the poor in their Unions, had led to many unsatisfactory results, and were not efficient as a means of testing the destitution of the people. It therefore became important to devise some means by which financial assistance could be afforded to Boards of Guardians without relieving them from the responsibility imposed on them by law, and which would, at the same time, not lead to the demoralisation of those seeking relief.

Change of Policy.

116. Mr. G.W. Balfour, Chief Secretary for Ireland, in the House of Commons on February 9th, 1898, after alluding to the very large cost of supervision of the Government relief works in 1891 and 1895 went on to say : " But there is a more grave and serious objection still. These relief works have the effect of taking the whole of the responsibility off the shoulders of the local authority, and practically the whole of the extra expense, and, therefore, it became an object in each successive year with Boards of Guardians and persons resident in these distressed districts to secure that this assistance should be given again, and we have gradually reached a condition of things when not a year passes without frantic

appeals to the Government to start relief works at the Government's expense. The demoralisation created by such a state of things is extreme, and I am sure that everyone acquainted with the administration of the Poor Law must sympathise with me in the feeling that such a state of things should be brought to an end."

117. The plan adopted by the Government was as follows: In every Union in which it became apparent that exceptional distress existed owing to the failure of the potato crop, authority was given in anticipation of the passing of an outdoor relief Bill by Parliament to afford outdoor relief in food and fuel to destitute able-bodied persons and landholders. In any financially embarrassed Union, in which it seemed likely that large numbers of able-bodied persons would require assistance, and that the cost involved would tax the ratepayers beyond what they might reasonably be expected to bear, the Guardians were informed that if they adopted a suitable labour test as a condition of relief the Government, if they approved of the details of the scheme, would pay a large proportion of the cost of the total relief expenditure, including supervision. The condition laid down as qualifying for employment was that the persons seeking it should be those who had suffered from the failure of the potato crop, and who, if not so relieved, might be obliged to enter the workhouse. Persons who through sickness, age or infirmity were unable to work were afforded relief in food by the Guardians under the ordinary law or under special authority given by the Local Government Board, relaxing the restrictions upon outdoor relief.

118. The success of this change of policy led to the enactment of Sec. 13 of the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898, as a permanent provision for the relief of exceptional distress. This section throws on the Guardians the responsibility of instituting means for the relief thereof, subject to their satisfying the County Council and the Local Government Board as to the necessity for such a course. Under that section the cost of the extra relief is thus distributed—one-half on the Union, and one-half on the County in which the Union is comprised, subject in the case of a County to a rating limit of 3d. in the £.

A description of the working of this permanent statutory provision for the relief of exceptional distress has been written by Dr. Downes, and will be found in the Appendix.

119. Operations under this section were conducted in 1905 and 1908, and on each of these occasions the Government contributed a portion of the cost, varying from 25 to 75 per cent. The Distress of 1905 and 1908.

Relief Expenditure.

120. The following shows the expenditure on indoor and outdoor relief in the years named below:—

| | Indoor. | | | | | | | Outdoor. |
|------|---------|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------|
| | £ | | | | | | | £ |
| 1890 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 368,375 |
| 1891 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 370,042 |
| 1892 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 372,822 |
| 1893 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 352,638 |
| 1894 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 356,520 |
| 1895 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 353,262 |
| 1896 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 354,836 |
| 1897 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 374,160 |
| | | | | | | | | 194,750 |
| | | | | | | | | 198,838 |
| | | | | | | | | 196,754 |
| | | | | | | | | 188,566 |
| | | | | | | | | 186,231 |
| | | | | | | | | 185,936 |
| | | | | | | | | 177,673 |
| | | | | | | | | 178,687 |

It will be observed that the returns for the year ended September, 1897, show an increase over the preceding year of £19,324 in "in-maintenance and clothing, and an increase of £1,014 in outdoor relief." The total expenditure on indoor and outdoor relief in that year as stated above was £374,160 and £178,687 respectively. Since then the expenditure under these heads has, with some slight fluctuations, steadily increased, and for the year 1907 amounted to £465,554 for indoor and £214,184 for outdoor relief.

CHAPTER IV.

POOR LAW RELIEF MACHINERY.

We shall now proceed to describe the machinery established and now existing under the Poor Law Acts and the application of our proposed reform of the system to Ireland.

(a) THE CENTRAL AUTHORITY.

The Local
Government
Board for Ireland.

121. The constitution of the Irish Local Government Board has been already referred to; it will have been seen that it differs very materially from that of the Central Authority in England. The Chief Secretary for the time being is the President of the Board, but owing to his absence from Ireland during the Parliamentary Session, and to his many other duties in connection with the government of the country, he is not in a position to devote that constant and undivided attention to the administration by Irish Local Authorities which the President of the English Board gives to the work of his Department. In Ireland, consequently, all the powers of the President are also exercisable by the Vice-President, who is the permanent Head of the Department responsible to the President for all the acts of the Board.

122. The work of the Local Government Board was very largely increased by the Local Government Act of 1898. The fiscal work which up to that time had been in the hands of the Grand Juries and the Baronial Presentment Sessions, subject to the *fiat* of the Judge of Assize, was transferred to 33 County Councils and 213 District Councils elected on a local government franchise, administering the laws subject to rules prescribed by the Local Government Board and to its general supervision as regards finance.

The work of the Boards of Guardians was simplified to a great extent by the change from electoral division rating to Union rating, and by the transfer of all the business of the assessment and collection of rates to the County Councils. The Local Government Board, however, retained its duties in regard to the supervision of the Collectors.

The reduction of the work of the Local Government Board so far as related to Boards of Guardians was more than counterbalanced by the increased duties in connection with the financial relations set up between the County Councils, the District Councils, and the Boards of Guardians, as well as by its duty of adjudicating upon the numerous matters relating to County administration which form the subject of inquiry by Inspectors.

Temporary
Commissioner
appointed.

123. An additional Commissioner was appointed on the Local Government Board in 1898 for 5 years, but after his retirement the work continued to increase. 22 new Acts affecting the Board have been passed since that date and, although the number of papers dealt with by the Board has increased from about 70,000 to approximately double that number in the year, it does not appear that any permanent increase of staff has been appointed adequate to meet the pressure.

Qualification of
Inspectors.

124. We understand that the Local Government Board, while strongly in favour of definite qualifications and a knowledge of the County and Local Government administration being laid down as a condition of the appointment of Inspectors upon their entry into its service, does not consider that the system of Assistant Inspectors, such as we have recommended for England, would be necessary in Ireland. The Board has a staff of temporary Inspectors in constant employment, and the practice has been when vacancies occur on the permanent staff to fill them by selecting from the temporary list, those who have given best proof of their ability and qualifications.

Increase of Staff
recommended.

125. We consider that an increase in the indoor and outdoor staff is necessary in order to relieve the strain upon the Vice-President and the higher officials of the Board, and to enable a more frequent inspection of the workhouses to be made and a closer co-operation between the Inspectors and the Poor Law Authorities to be carried out.

126. The powers of the English and the Irish Local Government Boards in regard to appointment and removal of officers, the inspection of workhouses, the audit of accounts, and the exercise of borrowing powers by the Guardians are practically identical. There is, however, this important difference in the relations between the Central and Local Authorities in England and Ireland, namely, that the Irish Local Government Board has under the Poor Relief Act of 1847 a more direct responsibility for the due and effectual relief of the poor than that imposed upon the English Local Government Board.

The powers of the English and Irish Local Government Boards.

127. Under Section 18 of that Act if a Board of Guardians do not hold their meetings regularly, or if they do not duly and effectually discharge their duties according to the intention of the Poor Relief Acts, the Local Government Board may dissolve the Board of Guardians and appoint paid Guardians at the expense of the rates to carry into execution all the provisions of the Poor Law. The practical effect of this enactment has been held to make the Local Government Board responsible for the proper administration of the Law. This power is only used as a last resort when all other means of inducing the Guardians to fulfil their statutory obligations have failed, and it is one which no President would agree to exercise for any but a most serious and persistent default which could not be dealt with by surcharge or other process of law. It has, however, been frequently exercised, the default in the greatest number of instances having been the failure of the Guardians to provide funds and to take adequate measures for the relief of exceptional distress.

Power to dissolve Boards of Guardians.

128. We have recommended in our Report for England and Wales that in order to assist the new Local Authorities to understand the spirit of their duties and the intention of the Legislature, the codification and consolidation of existing Poor Law Statutes, as well as of all Orders and circulars should be undertaken, and to expedite this work we recommend that as in England, so in Ireland, a small committee of Poor Law and legal experts should be appointed to sit continuously until the task is completed.

Codification of Poor Laws.

129. It would also be desirable to issue a small manual of instructions for the guidance of local authorities. The manual, we are of opinion, should contain an exposition of the main features of the law relating to Public Assistance, and of the policy of the Central Authority.

Manual of Instructions.

130. When our recommendations are carried into effect it will probably be found possible in Ireland as in England to devolve upon the new Local Authorities some powers which will reduce the number of formal consents as regards matters of small expenditure.

Devolution of powers.

131. It seems to us desirable that the Local Government Board should be enabled to order the erection of a new institution,¹ even though the Public Assistance Authority² may not be willing to incur the expense. The number of institutions, however, in Ireland, seems to us redundant and therefore this power will seldom have to be exercised.

Erection of new institutions.

132. The Central Authority should be empowered to direct that a particular class or classes of inmates for whom there is no suitable accommodation in the area of the Public Assistance Authority should be removed to or treated in any available and suitable institution of another Public Assistance Authority, and to compel Public Assistance Authorities to combine to provide for certain classes of cases, when sufficient and suitable accommodation is not otherwise available, and failing agreement between the authorities concerned.

Accommodation for particular classes of inmates.

133. The Local Government Board should be enabled to empower the Public Assistance Authority to purchase land compulsorily for the provision or enlargement of institutions.

Land.

134. We think that Inspectors should be authorised to attend not only meetings of the Public Assistance Authorities but also those of the Public Assistance Committees and Sub-Committees, as well as to visit institutions. They should be ready to advise the Public Assistance Committee in regard to general principles and methods of Public Assistance; they should in conjunction with the Public Assistance officers be encouraged to visit individual cases, so as to ascertain whether the Assistance is given under suitable conditions.

Inspectors should attend meetings of Public Assistance Authorities and Committees.

¹ See page 36 paragraph 147.

² See page 39.

Inspectors should receive instructions.

Upon appointment, Inspectors should receive written or printed instructions as to their duties and such instructions should be periodically revised. Conferences should take place between Inspectors, at least annually, to enable them to exchange views and experiences and thus to carry out methodically the policy of the Department.

(b) GRANTS IN AID OF LOCAL TAXATION.

Inequitable distribution of grants in aid.

135. We desire to call special attention to the inequitable system upon which the Probate Duty and the Local Taxation grants are distributed in Ireland.

The Probate Duty grant is allocated to the Counties, according to their respective expenditure on roads and bridges during the year 1886, and to the Unions according to their expenditure during that year on salaries, rations and superannuation of officers.

No account whatever, it will be observed, is taken of the burden of pauperism, the magnitude of the local rates, or the circumstances of the ratepayers and their ability to pay rates in the different areas.

We have not been able to discover any merits in this arrangement, which results in the curious anomaly that the wealthier the Union the greater the share of the grant it receives, and that the minimum of relief is extended to the districts in which the burdens of taxation are most oppressive.

The following table shows the effect of this system.

| Union. | County. | Death Duty Grant 1906-7. | Medical and Teachers' Grant. 1906-7. | Agri- cultural Grant. 1906-7. | Total Grants in Aid. 1906-7. | Popula- tion 1901. | Produce of 1d. in the £ on Valua- tion 1906. | Valua- tion per head of Popula- tion. | Grants per head. |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|---|---------------------|
| | | £. | £. | £. | £. | | £ | £ s. d. | s. d. |
| Dunshaughlin-Trim | Meath | 399 | 332 | 2,383 | 3,114 | 7,979 | 438 | 13 4 0 | 7 9 |
| Celbridge | Meath | 485 | 408 | 3,568 | 4,461 | 13,973 | 454 | 7 16 0 | 6 4 |
| Delvin | Kildare | 579 | 456 | 2,122 | 3,157 | 14,225 | 442 | 7 9 0 | 4 5 |
| Croom | Westmeath | 316 | 250 | 1,717 | 2,283 | 8,477 | 221 | 6 6 0 | 5 4 |
| Killmallock | Limerick | 597 | 402 | 2,677 | 3,676 | 10,806 | 266 | 5 18 0 | 6 9 |
| Glenties | Limerick | 1,477 | 757 | 6,104 | 8,338 | 25,551 | 584 | 5 10 0 | 6 1 |
| Belmullet | Donegal | 669 | 539 | 1,059 | 2,267 | 33,191 | 93 | 13 0 | 1 4 |
| Oughterard | Mayo | 504 | 304 | 765 | 1,573 | 13,845 | 45 | 16 0 | 2 3 |
| Swineford | Galway | 393 | 366 | 921 | 1,680 | 17,732 | 66 | 18 0 | 1 10 |
| Clifden | Mayo | 758 | 490 | 2,123 | 3,371 | 44,162 | 176 | 19 0 | 1 6 |
| | Galway | 507 | 370 | 1,020 | 1,897 | 18,768 | 79 | 1 0 0 | 2 0 |

The Medical and Educational grants which, up to the passing of the Local Government Act of 1898, were voted annually by Parliament, varied in proportion to the expenditure by the local authorities on the subsidized service. In that year the produce of certain license duties together with a fixed annual Exchequer Grant was assigned to Ireland in lieu of the annual parliamentary grant.

So far as this Local Taxation Fund is not in any year sufficient to meet the charges on it, it was provided that there should be a *pro rata* reduction. But the wealthier Unions were so rapidly swallowing up the grants by the improvements and additions to their staffs which they were happily able to afford, that their increased calls on the fund diminished the already small share to which the western Unions were entitled. It therefore became necessary to limit their claims on the fund, and, at the same time, to secure to the poorer Unions the continuance of that relief which they had hitherto been receiving. This step was taken by the Local Government Act of 1902, which stereotyped each Union's share upon the basis of its receipts during the year ended 31st March, 1902.

136. Under our proposals for County rating and administration it follows that the old Union grants within each County will be pooled and be credited to the Common Fund in aid of the poor rate in each County.

137. The Agricultural Grant was fixed by the Local Government Act, 1898, on a basis of local expenditure, which has not since materially altered. Moreover, it is an element in the fixing of rents, and the prices of the tenants' holdings under the Land Purchase Acts. It is hardly practicable, therefore, to alter the basis of its allocation. But in reference to the other grants we think the distribution needs revision, and that the antiquated history of 1886 should not form an element of consideration, and we recommend that each County's share should be reconsidered anew upon a different basis, and that the relative burden of county rates and the valuation per head of the population in each County should be the principal factors in determining the future allocation. We are also of opinion that the Local Government Board should be empowered to withhold any grants if they were satisfied that the services provided by the Local Authorities were not being properly administered.

(c) POOR LAW AREAS, RATING, &c.

138. The instructions issued to the Assistant Commissioners when the delimitation of the several Unions was under consideration, are contained in a lengthy Minute dated October 9th, 1838. The main principle observed was similar to that followed in England, namely, to take as a centre the chief market town in each part of the country and attach to it the adjoining rural district, naturally and by practice belonging to it, within as far as possible a radius of 10 miles, or thereabouts. Starting with this general object in view, the entire country was ultimately partitioned into 130 separate Unions, as nearly uniform in size and population as the great difference existing in local circumstances would conveniently permit; but Poor Law administration being the sole purpose of the new organisation, little attention was given to rendering the boundaries co-terminous with the ancient and established ones of Counties or Baronies,¹ or Parishes.

139. The only limit in this respect imposed by law was that no townland could be divided. Hence the Irish Unions are to be regarded as being simply aggregations of townlands, as those in England are of parishes or *quasi*-parishes. The townland was adopted by the legislature in 1838 as the unit of Union organisation, under the impression that the entire country consisted of such denominations. It was subsequently found, however, that in some places there either were no townlands or that their boundaries were unknown, and it became necessary in consequence during the ensuing year to pass a short amending Act (2 Vic. c. 1) for the purpose of removing this difficulty.

The townland—which is peculiar to Ireland, having nothing in England at all corresponding to it—appears to be, as a rule, co-extensive with the old *seisreach* or plowland, which was, by estimation, supposed to contain about 120 Irish acres, exclusive of wood, moor and mountain, being the quantity of arable land capable of being turned up in the course of a year by a six-horse plough. The vast disparity, however, in extent between certain townlands, indicates that some, at least, of the number must have had an origin different from this—one being returned at only 1 acre 1 rood 1 pole, while another is given as containing as many as 7,012 acres—both, however, being extreme and exceptional cases of opposite kinds.

140. The several townlands which were to constitute each Union having been decided on, it next became necessary to group them together in separate electoral divisions. This sub-division was, as its name imports, only designed by the original framers of the Bill for the purpose of facilitating the election of Guardians and conveniently distributing the representative power; but in the passage of the measure through the House of Lords it underwent, in this respect, a very material and important alteration, whereby the electoral divisions were also constituted separate areas of chargeability for so much of the Union expenditure as appertained to the cost of maintenance of such of the destitute poor as had been previously resident therein, all other charges being borne by them in common according to net annual value, though assessed upon each electoral division separately. The 44th Section of the Act of 1838, however, enabled the elected Guardians of the several divisions to obtain a common rating by signing an agreement to that effect. It appears from the Annual Report for 1846 that the attempt to obtain a Union rate, which had been made in several instances, only succeeded in one, in which the Guardians of all the electoral divisions signed a written consent according to statute that all charges

Formation of Unions.
Electoral division made the area of charge.

¹ The barony, though having in name no corresponding territorial division in England, very closely resembles what is known as the hundred, or as it was formerly often called in the northern counties and in Scotland, the *Wapentake*. In the Act, 34 Henry VIII. (Irish), c. 1, the terms "hundred or barony" are coupled. See also footnote on p. 6.

should thereafter be borne in common by all the divisions of the Union. The precise term over which residence should extend to constitute chargeability against a particular electoral division, subsequently underwent many changes. A Select Committee of the House of Commons reported in 1861 that though several witnesses had recommended the substitution of Union for divisional rating, it was not desirable to alter the present arrangement of the law in that respect. They considered that an extension from three to five years of the time which suffices to make the pauper chargeable to the electoral division, instead of to the Union at large, would tend to remove undue pressure imposed on town electoral divisions from any sudden increase occasioned by the gravitation of pauperism towards the more populous districts. This recommendation was subsequently given effect to by Sec. 3 of the Act 39 & 40 Vic., c. 50, of 1876, and was a further and most important advance in the direction of Union rating. Ultimately Sec. 43 of the Local Government (Ireland) Act of 1898 established Union rating for all ordinary Poor Law purposes.

Number of
electoral
divisions.

141. The number of electoral divisions originally formed was 2,049, but consequent on the Report of the Boundary Commission¹ of 1848, the number was increased to 3,438.

The conditions in Ireland have entirely changed since the Boundary Commission reported in 1848. Since 1845 the whole population has declined by one-half, and the population of rural areas by considerably more than one-half. The electoral divisions followed the boundaries of the estates of the landowners. Many of those divisions are ludicrously small and lowly valued, but nevertheless two Guardians, or more properly, two Rural District Councillors, are solemnly elected to guard the expenditure of the rates raised on assessable valuations of 230*l.*, or 323*l.*, or 404*l.*, or 432*l.*, or 458*l.*, etc. The estates of the landowners have been sold, or are in the process of being sold, to the occupiers. Moreover, the Local Government Act, 1898, relieved the landowners from all liability for rates in regard to holdings let to tenants. Therefore the reason that operated for forming those small electoral divisions, no longer operates for retaining them. Furthermore, it is a matter of common knowledge in Ireland that it is difficult to find in those small and poor areas a supply of qualified men to discharge the duties of District Councillor. We recommend, therefore, that the number of electoral divisions should be reduced to the original number of 2,049, or perhaps a lesser number, and that the Local Government Board should be empowered to take the initiative and carry through this reduction. In amalgamating or dividing electoral divisions, regard should be had, as far as it may be convenient, to the well-known boundaries of parishes and baronies.

Number of
electoral
divisions should
be reduced.

Number of
Unions,

142. The number of Unions at first formed, as already stated, was 130. It was at first proposed that there should be 80; then the number was increased to 100. There was great unwillingness on the part of the Government of the day to find the money to build the workhouses. It was afterwards suggested whether 110 such establishments would not be sufficient. At last, however, the number was fixed at 130, and accordingly 130 Unions were formed. An additional Union (Dingle) was formed by the Poor Law Commissioners at the commencement of 1848, making 131. After the Report of the Boundary Commissioners, this number was increased to 163. Four have since been dissolved, and the present number is therefore 159.

In the course of time these Unions became the area of administration for a variety of purposes unconnected with the relief of the poor. The Guardians became the Sanitary Authority to administer the various Public Health Acts and Burial Acts. They were also charged with the administration of the Contagious Diseases Animals Act, the Registration of Voters, the Labourers Acts, &c., and raised a rate over the Unions for all those purposes.

Union areas
should be
brought within
county boundary

143. When the changes which we recommend in Poor Law administration are effected, the Union area, save where it extends into two or more Counties, will still remain a rateable area for public health, housing, &c. We recommend that the number of such areas should be reduced to the original 130, or perhaps the earlier 100. The burden of the rate for the purposes mentioned—apart altogether from rates for the relief of the poor—has a crushing effect on lowly-valued Rural Districts. Hence in amalgamating, or dividing Unions for Rural District purposes, close attention should be given to the valuation, as well as to the area and population of the existing and proposed Rural Districts. We still further develop the argument in paragraphs 153 to 163 of this Chapter.

¹ The Boundary Commission was appointed in March, 1848, owing to the representations made that the Unions and electoral divisions, as originally formed, were too large for the convenient and effectual administration of relief. At that period after the cessation of relief granted under the "Soup Kitchen" Act, about one million persons were treated under the Poor Law. *Vide* paragraphs 63 and 74.

A certain number of Unions extend into two or more Counties. At the passing of the Local Government Act, 1898, the integrity of those Unions had to be preserved for Poor Law purposes, and their division into County sections was required for County administrative purposes. Accordingly the Rural District Councillors elected for the whole Union area composed one Board of Guardians, and those among them who were elected for the electoral divisions of each County were formed into a distinct District Council, and that section of the Union became a rateable area for sanitary, housing, road-repairing, and other district purposes. Thirty-eight Unions have thus been split up into two, and eight Unions into three separate and independent Rural Districts. Under the County system of Public Assistance which we propose, there will no longer be any reason for maintaining a bond between two or three areas in adjoining Counties, and thus multiplying small rateable areas. Each area will be merged in its own County for Public Assistance as well as for all other purposes. We, therefore, recommend that the sectional Rural Districts, thus formed by the Act of 1898, should be amalgamated with the adjoining Rural Districts in each County, and the Councils of such Rural Districts dissolved. But the Local Government Board should be empowered to exercise a discretion in retaining any such sectional Rural District, or in combining two or more such sections in the same County into one Rural District.

(d) THE BOARD OF GUARDIANS.

144. Guardians were originally elected by the rated occupiers and owners of property on a scale of votes set out in Sec. 81 of the Act of 1838. This Act provided that the Poor Law Commissioners should fix the number of Guardians to be elected for each Union and electoral division. It also empowered them (Sec. 19) to fix the value of the qualifications for the office of Guardian, and by the Act 12 & 13 Vict., c. 104, Sec. 6, they were enabled to fix a different qualification for different electoral divisions of the same Union, this power in both cases being subject to the condition that the qualification must consist of being entitled to vote at elections of Guardians in such Unions, but not so as to require a higher qualification than a valuation of £30. In the Orders issued fixing the qualification the highest limit adopted was £30 and the lowest £6 and the average about £20. The Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898, repeals the property qualification for Guardians. To qualify for the office it is now only necessary that the person to be elected shall be a local government elector for the district, or during the whole of the twelve months preceding the election have lived in the district.

145. As regards the number of Guardians for each Union, it appears that the original intention was to limit the number of elected to from sixteen to twenty-four.¹ These, with the proportion of one-third *ex officio* Guardians as originally intended, would give to each Union a Board of from twenty-one to thirty-two members. The proportion of the *ex officio* Guardians was subsequently greatly increased, but Sec. 24 of the Local Government (I.) Act, 1898, abolished this element altogether.

The Vice-Regal Commission recommend that the number of Guardians throughout Ireland should be reduced to the number of Guardians elected prior to the year 1898.

The total number of elected Guardians in 1897 was 3,918. The numbers at present are :—

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|
| Elected as rural district councillors (under Sec. 23) of Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898 | - | - | - | - | - | 6,966 |
| Co-opted under Sec. 25 of same enactment | - | - | - | - | - | 555 |
| Urban guardians (elected under Sec. 24) | - | - | - | - | - | 670 |
| Total | - | - | - | - | - | 8,191 |

146. Approving of the object which the Vice-Regal Commission had in view in making this proposal, and adapting the proposal to the system of Public Assistance herein advocated, we recommend that only one representative should be elected for each electoral division. We also recommend the repeal of the 25th Section of the Local Government (I.) Act, 1898, by which the Rural District Council has the power to choose three additional members for their Council. That power has not, as a rule, been used to secure the services of persons who, though endowed with known administrative capacity are unwilling to face the ordeal of a popular election; or who, for some reason, are unable to get elected. The power has occasionally been used to restore to the Council a former member who was rejected at the polls. This is an abuse of the

¹ Nicholls' History of the Irish Poor Law, p. 238.

powers of co-option which we regard as a violation of sound constitutional practice. If the constituents declare by their votes that their Councillor was tried and found wanting, the Council should not override such a decision. Moreover, such action creates in the minds of the electors a feeling of disgust, apathy and helplessness; and in the minds of the Councillors a false sense of confidence that they may with impunity act in defiance of the opinions of their constituents and of the public.

(e) THE WORKHOUSE.

147. The Poor Law Commissioners of 1838 were empowered to acquire land and to build or cause to be built thereon "a workhouse or workhouses" for any Union not having a workhouse. They could also purchase or hire buildings suitable to be used or converted into a workhouse or workhouses, and enlarge or alter same, provided that once they had declared a workhouse fit for the reception of the destitute poor of a Union they were not at liberty to direct the expenditure of any sums thereon exceeding £400 without the previous consent in writing of the majority of the Guardians of the Union. Sec. 34 of the Act of 1838, therefore, provides for the vesting of all such property in the Central Authority, and "every such house of industry, workhouse or foundling hospital shall, if, and when the Commissioners shall so direct, be a workhouse of the Union in which the same may be situate."

The Dublin House of Industry, after some necessary alteration, became the workhouse of the North Dublin Union and the foundling hospital the workhouse of the South Dublin Union. The City of Cork had also a foundling hospital and a house of industry, but the latter alone was found to be suitable for the purposes of a workhouse.

Difficulty in securing sites for workhouses.

148. The Poor Law Commissioners in their Report for 1841 comment on the difficulty they had experienced in obtaining eligible workhouse sites. So great was their embarrassment that at one time they contemplated applying to the Legislature for additional powers to remove the impediments.

Workhouse buildings.

149. The style of building adopted for workhouses was of the cheapest description compatible with durability, all mere decoration being studiously excluded. The Poor Law Commissioners in their Annual Report for 1842 state that if they had yielded to the prevalent wish of many Boards of Guardians "the workhouses would have been finished and fitted up with all the appurtenances of a hospital or infirmary—a desire which it will be our duty to resist."

Cost of erecting workhouses.

150. The cost of purchasing the land and of erecting the workhouse buildings was defrayed in the first instance from the Imperial Exchequer, and made repayable from the poor rates of the Union by equal instalments spread over twenty years, without interest for the first ten years. Repayment of these instalments was actually made in very few cases; and towards the close of the famine period £1,321,366 was due from Irish Unions to the Exchequer under the head of workhouse loans. There were at this time other debts, chiefly famine debts, due to the Exchequer from Irish Counties, Baronies, half-Baronies and townlands, which amounted to a total of £3,722,355. It was determined to consolidate these debts, and to charge each of the 60,760 townlands in Ireland with its own proper share payable by instalments spread over different periods, according to the exigencies of the case. This work was accomplished with great labour, and the poor rate became the medium for payment of the annual instalments, a special poundage in respect thereof being included in every rate on the townland, which when collected became the property of the electoral division comprising it, and the electoral division thereafter lay under the obligation to pay the collective debt of all its townlands to the Imperial Treasury.

For about two years these instalments were duly paid, but in the year 1853, the Government remitted the remainder of the debt. The result of these operations has been to leave the proprietorship of the workhouses vested in the Local Government Board, subject to a constructive right of occupancy by the Board of Guardians in each case, and free from all debt and incumbrance.

There is only one exception to this state of affairs, and that is in the case of the Clonmel Union in the County Tipperary, which possesses one of the finest workhouses in Ireland, but which, unfortunately, was obliged to borrow the money for erecting it from private sources, the fund at the command of the Exchequer Loan Commissioners being at that time (1851) exhausted.

Accommodation in workhouses.

151. From a House of Commons Return in 1878 it would seem that accommodation was provided in the workhouses of Ireland for 147,222 persons. It is stated, however,

in the Report of the Poor Law Union and Lunacy Inquiry Commission (Ireland), 1879, that this calculation had been made on a misleading basis :—

“ The rule adopted was simply to ascertain the cubic contents of every sleeping room, or rather of every room that could be made available as a sleeping room, and then, without reference to either height or width, apportion it according to a fixed amount of cubic space for each inmate. No account seems to have been taken of the need of adequate day accommodation for the several classes. Infectious wards and probationary wards, though only available, however commodious they may be, for a very limited number, are included in the Return at their full capacity of accommodation upon the scale of cubic space ; while in some cases buildings that have either ceased to be used or are unfit for use as accommodation for inmates, are included. . . . If the Local Government Board had occasion at the present time to reconsider the accommodation of Irish workhouses, we are satisfied that the limit would be fixed at from 45 to 50 per cent. below the numbers given in the recent Parliamentary Return.”

152. Such in very brief outline is the History of the establishment of the English Workhouse system in Ireland, which the Vice-Regal Commission has condemned in strong terms. There is no need for us to traverse the same ground, for we share their opinion that the general mixed workhouse is unsuited to the condition of Ireland and is foreign to the sentiment of the country. We now proceed to discuss in some detail the changes which should be introduced.

(f) PROPOSED LOCAL MACHINERY OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE.

153. We have found in the course of our inquiries in Great Britain, that the lack of classification of the inmates of the workhouse is one of the gravest defects of the existing system of administration, and that effective classification cannot be attained as long as all classes of inmates are housed within the walls of a single institution. We regard it as a cardinal principle of our proposals that there should be classification *by* institutions, and not merely *in* institutions. The areas and the resources of the existing Unions are, as a rule, too limited, and the numbers of necessitous persons too small, to warrant the Guardians in erecting and maintaining as many types of institution as there are classes of inmates. Few Boards of Guardians have more than one workhouse in their Union. With the view, therefore, of placing several buildings at the disposal of the new Local Authority, and of supplying them with the means of maintaining a variety of institutions we recommend that, as in England and Wales, so in Ireland, the County or County Borough should replace the Union as the area of administration for institutional treatment, and that no exception from this principle should be permissible unless the Local Government Board is satisfied that such exception would in each particular case be in the best interests of administration.

154. As the inmates of each institution will be drawn from all parts of each County it follows that the area of charge should be the County or County Borough, and co-terminous with the area of administration. The Vice-Regal Commission have already recommended for Ireland classification by institutions, and the substitution of the County for the Union, as the area of administration and of charge for institutions. It will, therefore, be observed that upon the chief reform advocated, the two Commissions are in entire accord.

155. In Ireland, as we have already seen (paragraph 140), the Act of 1838 constituted the electoral division the area of charge. The rating of so small an area was considered to work inequitably, as it was generally the poor and lowly-valued electoral divisions which supplied the largest number of necessitous persons, and at the same time supplied, on a specified assessment, the smallest amount of rates for their maintenance. Hence the Local Government Act of 1898 abolished the separate rating of electoral divisions and enacted that all Poor Law expenditure should be defrayed out of a uniform rate over the entire Union.

What was true of the electoral division in relation to the Union is equally true of County Rating. the Union itself in relation to the County. The total valuation of many Unions along the western, south-western, and north-western sea-board is small, the population large, and the necessitous poor numerous. We are of opinion, therefore, that in Ireland, as well as in England, County rating should take the place of Union rating.

156. We may point out that, in addition to the various arguments in favour of County rating which we have stated in Part IX., pars. 5-8, of our English Report, all of which apply with even greater force to Ireland, there are other reasons peculiar to the latter country to which we shall now refer, and which in our opinion render the

enlargement of areas in Ireland an essential preliminary condition to any useful and desirable reform.

At the time the Irish Poor Law Unions were in process of formation, it was supposed that the only charge falling upon them would be the cost of Poor Relief administration. The standard of living of the people was poor and primitive in the extreme, and the cost of diet and clothing of the paupers, and of equipment of the work-house was correspondingly low. The average weekly cost of food and clothing, &c., it was calculated, would be 1s. 6d. per head per week, and the total cost of establishment charges and maintenance in the 100 Unions that were then proposed to be built was estimated at £295,000 a year.

The Commissioners in laying out the Union boundaries took in an area of roughly speaking about 10 miles on all sides from the market centre, and doubtless saw no reason to concern themselves with any question as to the sufficiency of the valuation or the rateable capacity of the area, in view of the very limited rate which they calculated would have to be levied to provide for the estimated expenditure.

Increase of Rates
on Union Areas.

But since that date the cost of maintenance and clothing has increased to 4s. 2d. per head per week: the areas which were defined solely for Poor Relief expenditure have been saddled with further charges in respect of Medical Charities, Vaccination, Public Health, Housing, &c. Moreover, the cost of repairing roads and doing other local works which, prior to 1898, had been apportioned in the area of the Barony are now levied off the area of the Union. The result of all this is that the Unions which were formed as areas off which to levy £295,000 a-year have become the areas for raising an annual charge approximating to one and a half millions.

157. Had this been foreseen, it may safely be assumed that there would have been some grouping together of rich and poor divisions of a county, with a view of equalising as far as possible the financial burdens; but nothing of the kind was attempted or necessary at the time, and it would be difficult to conceive a more inequitable or inappropriate combination for the purposes they now serve than the present Union areas, especially in the western counties. The rich portions of the county are in most instances in a ring-fence, secure against heavy burdens of pauperism and oppressive rates; while those parts of the county where the bulk of the poor are congregated, have to bear the whole cost of relieving the distress among the vast population of the congested areas of the county, where the poverty of the daily life of the people so nearly approaches actual want, that the border line between the two is scarcely perceptible.

Thus we find that in the County of Mayo, for example, there are eight Unions with the valuation per head of the population varying from 15s. 11d. in Belmullet to £2 17s. 4d. in Ballinrobe. In the former case the poundage of the poor relief expenditure is just four times as high as it is in the latter.

158. In all parts of the country we observe the same want of uniformity in the burden of local taxation,—the result of fixing the Union boundaries according to area and population without reference to assessable value; and so it happens that the magnitude of the rates varies in the inverse ratio to the ability of the people to meet them. In other words, the less the people are able to pay high rates, the higher are the rates which they are called upon to pay.

159. The effect of the numerous additional services charged upon the low-valued Unions has been that while these Unions can struggle on in ordinary years by observing a rigid economy which would be almost equivalent to default in a better circumstanced Union, they cannot in times of agricultural distress meet their obligations. The Poor Relief administration breaks down, and, unless Parliament voted money for the purposes of relief, the poor would be in danger of starvation. Since the year 1880 the amount of the Special Grants which have been made to these Unions on account of their inability to raise sufficient funds for the maintenance of their destitute poor is not far short of £500,000.

Multiplicity of
Areas a source of
weakness.

160. In our English volume we have explained that the multiplicity of areas is a source of weakness in administration, that great variations in area and population are inconsistent with uniformity of administration, that only by an enlargement of areas is it possible to secure the objects desired. To all these reasons, which apply both in England and Ireland, we must add, therefore, in reference to Ireland that, owing to the smallness and want of uniformity of Union areas, the Poor Law machinery has broken down in the poorest part of the country whenever it has had to meet any abnormal strain.

161. The Local Government Act has accentuated to some extent the difficulties of financing the poorer Unions in time of distress, inasmuch as it transferred the incidence of the poor rate from the owner to the occupier, while applying one half of the Agricultural Grant towards the landlord's portion of the poor rate. The poor rates on the small holdings are now collected from the occupiers, so that in those districts where practically the whole population consist of these cottier tenants, the burden of relieving the landholders who are in distress falls upon their neighbours who are nearly as poor as themselves. Rates now payable by occupiers.

162. An opposition to County rating may perhaps be apprehended from some districts, and the reason for it is not far to seek. There is hardly a County in Ireland where there is not a great disparity of valuation and rating in the several Unions within its boundaries, and the impression, which not unnaturally prevails, is, that the levelling up of the poor rates must mean that the poor Unions will be relieved at the expense of the rich, and that the latter will have to bear a very considerable addition to their present rates. We see no reason whatever to apprehend any such result. Undoubtedly that is what would happen if all the Unions were maintained as at present, and the costs of the whole Union administration in the County were pooled. But in the scheme that we have before us one of the chief features is the abolition of many of these nearly empty Workhouses which are maintained at so heavy a cost to the ratepayers. These buildings were provided at a time when the population was double what it is at present; they are for the most part nearly empty, and as the future race of old and infirm will be supported by the old age pensions, there will be still less reason for their retention. In a County such as Galway, for example, one workhouse to be used as an "Alms-house," two or three for the sick, and one as a test house would probably serve all the needs of the County, in place of the ten which at present exist. The saving on the cost by the abolition of four or five establishments, and the better and more economical administration consequent upon a proper classification would probably more than counterbalance any possible increase to the wealthier Unions when all expenses are charged to a common fund. Opposition to County rating.

163. Having proposed a County system of institutions which are to be maintained by a County rate, we must adopt the logical consequence that the County Council or the County Borough Council should be the authority to strike and collect the rate, and to manage directly or indirectly the institutions. As the County Council and the County Borough Council have much work to do, we propose that the Council should appoint a Statutory Committee, to be called the Public Assistance Authority, which should manage and control all Public Assistance institutions and the services connected therewith throughout the County.

(1) CONSTITUTION OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AUTHORITY.

164. As regards the constitution of the Public Assistance Authority, we propose:—

(a) That the Public Assistance Authority shall be a Statutory Committee of the County or County Borough Council constituted as follows:—

(i.) One-half of the members to be appointed by the Council of the County or County Borough, and the persons so appointed may be persons who are members of the Council.

(ii.) The other half of the members to be appointed by the Council from outside their number and to consist of persons experienced in the local administration of Public Assistance or other cognate work.

(iii.) The actual number of members of the Public Assistance Authority in each case from time to time to be determined by the Local Government Board; after consideration of a scheme submitted on the first occasion by the Council of the County or County Borough, and on subsequent occasions by the Public Assistance Authority.

(iv). Women to be eligible for appointment under either head (i) or (ii).

(b) That one-third of the members of the Public Assistance Authority shall retire each year, but shall be eligible for reappointment if duly qualified. A member ceasing to be a member of County Council or County Borough Council shall *ipso facto* cease to be a member of the Public Assistance Authority, but shall be eligible for reappointment if otherwise qualified.

(2) POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AUTHORITY.

165. The powers and duties of the Public Assistance Authority would, subject to the regulations and general control of the Local Government Board, be as follows :—

(a) To set up and supervise the Public Assistance Committees for investigating and deciding applications for assistance, and for dealing with applicants in accordance with the regulations of the Local Government Board.

(b) To make rules and standing-orders for the guidance of the Public Assistance Committees.

(c) To dissolve any Public Assistance Committee subject to the assent of the Local Government Board.

(d) To organise, provide and maintain the institutions necessary for the supply of sufficient and suitable assistance within their area, or to combine with other Public Assistance Authorities for that purpose, and to be responsible for all contracts and stocktaking.

(e) To provide for the net cost of the administration of Public Assistance within their area, and, generally, to undertake financial responsibility for such administration.

(f) To appoint and allocate to the Public Assistance Committees such officers as are necessary for their work.

The expenditure which each Public Assistance Authority determines to be required for the administration of public assistance within their area, should, in the case of a County be paid out of the County fund, and in the case of a County Borough, by the Town Council out of the poor rate.

Any loan required would be raised by the Council of the County or County Borough as the case may be.

166. A Public Assistance Authority constituted on those lines should be particularly adapted to Ireland. By the Act of 1898 the County Councils were empowered and required to appoint Statutory Committees of Management for the Lunatic Asylums and for the County Infirmaries. Those Committees consist partly of Councillors and partly of philanthropic workers, clergymen, and other persons experienced in charitable and benevolent undertakings, and in the case of the County infirmaries there are representatives from the former corporations of the governors and governesses. Under the Agricultural and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act, 1899, the County Councils appoint similar Statutory Committees of Agriculture and of Technical Instruction consisting partly of Councillors and partly of outsiders to manage the important matters of Agriculture and of Technical Instruction for their Counties, or their County Boroughs. These various Statutory Committees have worked with much success—due in some degree to the element of outsiders—and that success has been one of the reasons that determined us to adopt the constitution of the Public Assistance Authority which we have recommended in the English section of our Report. Therefore, without any hesitation, we recommend a similarly constituted Public Assistance Authority for Ireland.

(3) PUBLIC ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE.

167. The Public Assistance Authority, whose powers and duties will extend over the whole County, or County Borough, shall avail of Public Assistance Committees as local executive agencies. The area of the Public Assistance Committee shall :—

(a) In the first instance be, within a County, the Union areas, and within a County Borough the areas of the Union or of the relief districts.

(b) Ultimately, the areas of the Public Assistance Committees shall be such as the Public Assistance Authority, with the consent of the Local Government Board, shall prescribe, and those areas shall as far as possible be co-terminous with one or more rural or urban districts.

(c) Every Union overlapping the boundaries of a County or County Borough shall be dealt with so that each part of such Union entirely within a County or County Borough shall be either provisionally constituted a separate Public Assistance Committee area, or else provisionally attached to another Public Assistance Committee area within the County or County Borough in which such part is situated, and the Local Government Board shall issue Orders accordingly.

(4) CONSTITUTION OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE.

168. Each Public Assistance Committee shall be appointed by the Public Assistance Authority, care being taken that amongst those so appointed there shall be included a certain proportion of persons nominated by the Urban and Rural District Councils, and where a voluntary aid committee has been established in a district a certain proportion nominated by that committee. The persons so nominated shall be experienced in the local administration of Public Assistance or other cognate work and shall include a proportion of women, in our judgment not ordinarily less than one-third. One-third of the members shall retire each year, but shall be eligible for re-election.

(5) DUTIES OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE.

169. The following will be the duties of the Public Assistance Committee under the rules laid down by the Public Assistance Authority :—

(a) To make careful inquiry into the circumstances and condition of all persons applying for assistance within their area with a view to ascertaining the cause and nature of their distress.

(b) To review periodically the circumstances and condition of persons in receipt of assistance.

(c) To investigate the means of persons liable for maintenance and to take the measures necessary for the recovery of the cost of the assistance given.

(d) To sub-divide their area when desirable, subject to the assent of the Public Assistance Authority.

(e) To determine in the case of each person applying for or receiving assistance whether such person is by law entitled to assistance.

(f) To decide upon the best method of assisting applicants with a view to removing the cause of distress.

(g) To co-operate with the Voluntary Aid Committee¹ with a view to the assistance of cases of distress.

(h) To co-operate with other public and voluntary agencies.

(i) To inspect, supervise, and administer the Public Assistance Authority's institutions within their area and such other institutions as the Public Assistance Authority shall direct.

(j) To secure periodical visitation of all cases in receipt of home assistance.

(k) To make half-yearly an estimate of their expenditure and requirements, and submit it to the Public Assistance Authority, who shall from time to time remit such sum or sums as may be necessary.

(l) To control and supervise the officers assigned to them by the Public Assistance Authority.

(m) To furnish the Public Assistance Authority from time to time with such information concerning the proceedings and work of the Committee as the Authority may require.

(n) To discharge such other duties as the Public Assistance Authority may, from time to time, call upon them to undertake.

¹ *Vide* p. 43.

The question of the new Local Authorities is discussed somewhat more fully in the English Section of our Report (Part IX., paragraphs 1-26 inclusive). We consider that the recommendations we make therein can be given effect to more easily and more advantageously in Ireland than even in England.

170. Our recommendations in regard to the new Local Authorities may seem at first sight different from those of the Vice-Regal Commission. The difference, however, is more apparent than real. The Vice-Regal Commission would retain the simulacrum of a Board of Guardians but would leave very little direct exercise of power in their hands. The workhouses as distinct institutions for single Unions would disappear. A certain number of them would be converted into County institutions to provide for particular classes drawn from the entire County. The hospital in each Union would continue to exist and would in the future be the only Union institution, but the direct management of that sole Union institution would be taken out of the hands of the Boards of Guardians.

The proposals of the Vice-Regal Commission.

There are in Ireland 159 Boards composed of 8,191 Guardians; *i.e.*, an average of 51 Guardians to each Board. According to the proposal of the Vice-Regal Commission, after the triennial elections those fifty-one Guardians should, at their first meeting, select six out of their number, who, reinforced by a certain number of outsiders, should have for the following three years the exclusive management of the hospital, the only institution that belonged to the Guardians. The remaining forty-five Guardians would have no power or duty in the matter until at the next election they were again called upon to perform a similar act of delegation. The Hospital Committees of all the Unions in the County would be combined to form a County Hospital Committee, which would be charged with the management of the County Infirmary. The County institutions for the various classes of necessitous poor which would replace the present general workhouses would be managed by County Committees consisting of a few Guardians selected by each Board in the County. Here, again, the only direct exercise of power of a Board of fifty or sixty Guardians would be at their first meeting to hand over power over all the County institutions to some four or six of their number. The Body of the Guardians having delegated their powers to a few of their number would have no control over the County Institutions during the period for which they were elected.

171. We doubt if a system by which a numerous body of Guardians would delegate the more important part of their work to a fraction of their number would appeal to the best qualified persons in the localities to seek election. No doubt most of the Guardians are elected as District Councillors, but the representatives of the Urban Districts are elected exclusively for Poor Law work, and highly qualified candidates would not have a sufficient motive to face the ordeal of an election; the election of a large number of persons for a service which to a large extent turns out but nominal, seems to us unsound in principle.

Under the proposals of the Vice-Regal Commission the delegates from all the Boards of Guardians in a County would assemble together to form the County-Authority to control the County Hospital and other County institutions. Thus a body whose members were elected by the voters for an electoral division of a Union and for purely Union work, would be placed in a position of control over the institutions of a whole County and in charge of finances which were raised by rates over that wide area.

It is more consonant with constitutional ideas that the County Council whose members are elected by the voters of County electoral divisions and expressly for County work should exercise those functions. Moreover, through the appointment on the Public Assistance Committees of persons nominated by the Urban and Rural District Councils the local bodies will get the representation the Vice-Regal Commission desired, in a different, but we think in a more constitutional manner.

We hope that in each area of a Public Assistance Committee, persons who have previously acted efficiently as Guardians, will be placed on the new Public Assistance Committee.

172. We recommend that a small temporary Commission working under the Local Government Board should be appointed composed of persons of administrative experience, with a view to securing an early and effective development of the new system

(6) VOLUNTARY AID COUNCILS AND COMMITTEES.

173. In the scheme which we have proposed for England and Wales, Voluntary Charities have for the first time in the history of English Poor Law been given a definite status and consequent opportunity for usefulness. In Par. 237 of Pt. VII. of our English Report we have described in detail the organisation of Voluntary Aid Councils and Voluntary Aid Committees so that side by side with the Public Assistance Authorities and Committees there may be associations of charitably and devoutly disposed persons ready and qualified to help in the treatment of individual cases. These Councils are to be called into existence by the Lords Lieutenant and the Mayors of County Boroughs to work in the area of the Public Assistance Authority. They are to consist of trustees of endowed charities, of members of registered Voluntary Charities, of some members of the Public Assistance Authority, and of such persons as members of Friendly Societies, of Trade Associations, of Religious organisations, and of other persons, being co-opted members. The duties of the Voluntary Aid Councils would be for the most part not executive but supervisory—executive duties being assigned to the Voluntary Aid Committees. The Voluntary Aid Council would supervise the operations of these Committees generally and, as far as possible, maintain the same principles of help and relief throughout the County or County Borough. They would collect funds for distribution to Voluntary Aid Committees, and allocate funds to poor districts.

These Voluntary Aid Councils are to appoint Committees, who may advise and assist persons in distress who are not suitable for treatment by the Public Assistance Committees. The Committees are to be responsible for such a system of voluntary visitation or inquiry as may be deemed advisable in view of the physical needs and habits of those they desire to assist. It is further provided that such Voluntary Aid Councils and Committees should be eligible for subscriptions towards their work from the Public Assistance Committees.

174. It may be urged that in Ireland it will not be possible to establish simultaneously throughout the country these Voluntary Aid Councils and Committees. There is, however, reason to hope that once the advantages of such organisations are recognised they would spread. We are encouraged in this opinion because there are already in Ireland Associations which together would in many cases form the nucleus of this new organisation, and in this connection we may especially refer, (a) to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and (b) The Women's National Health Association.

(a) The Charitable Society of St. Vincent de Paul is practically a world-wide organisation. In Ireland there are no less than 170 branches with more than three thousand active members in various cities and towns. The object of the Society is to relieve distress without religious distinction, by means of voluntary visitors. Careful inquiries are made as to the circumstances of each case and appropriate assistance is, wherever practicable, provided. The Organisation is maintained by voluntary contributions, and both laity and clergy spare no pains to provide such assistance as may be desirable.

(b) The Women's National Health Association, which has been established by Lady Aberdeen, with certain well-defined aims and duties, and has achieved a remarkable measure of success in a very short time, having gathered into its ranks a large number of voluntary workers in the country. It has about 100 branches. The Association provides lectures, and distributes leaflets and pamphlets relating to the preservation of public health, prevention of disease, domestic economy, hygiene, cooking and simple rules for health. It affords advice on nursing, infant life protection, milk supply, etc., to the wives of working men. It keeps in touch with the local authorities in regard to the sanitary requirements of their districts, and takes measures to secure the appointment of district nurses where such are required. The Association has an illustrated monthly newspaper for the propagation of health principles, which also serves as an official record of its work. It has a strong advisory Council in Dublin, including many well-known sanitary experts, officials, and professional men of the highest standing.

175. We believe, that such of the work of the Voluntary Aid Committees as is applicable to Ireland will not be outside the general scope of the work of these organisations and their local branches. The branches composed of enthusiastic workers under central councils, could in many parts of the country efficiently fulfil all the functions of Voluntary Aid for which there is any need in Ireland. We have little doubt they would be willing to enlarge their spheres of operations so as to co operate with the Public Assistance Committee upon those matters which in England are to be entrusted to the Voluntary Aid Councils and Committees.

CHAPTER V.

FORMS OF RELIEF.

(a) INDOOR RELIEF.

176. In extending the Poor Law system to Ireland, the Legislature, taught no doubt by the abuses of outdoor relief to the able-bodied in England, determined that the destitute should be relieved in one way only, viz., in the workhouse. On this point Mr. Nicholls observes: "The strict limitation of relief to the workhouse may possibly be objected to on the ground that extreme want is found occasionally to assail large portions of the population who ought then to be relieved at the public charge, without being subject to the restraint of the workhouse. But this is an exceptional case, and it would not, I think, be wise to adapt the regulations of the Poor Law administration in Ireland to the possible occurrence of such a contingency." This policy was pursued down to 1847, when the Legislature gave the Guardians the option of relieving certain specified classes either in or out of the workhouse. The Guardians do not appear to have been very anxious at first to avail themselves of this option; the workhouse accommodation was increased year after year, and in 1857 out of a total expenditure of £588,678, only £2,412 was for relief afforded out of the workhouse. The change in the views of the Guardians since then may be appreciated by a glance at the table in the Appendix which shows that the expenditure on indoor and outdoor relief for the year 1907 was £465,554 and £214,184 respectively.

177. As in England, so in Ireland, we desire to record our opinion that there is no subject in Poor Law Administration on which it is more difficult to generalise than the workhouse. Some of those institutions which we have visited have been very far below the level of efficiency; in others, we have found incontrovertible evidence that those responsible for their administration, both the officials and the Guardians, have spared no pains to ameliorate the inmates' conditions of life. As a matter of fact, much depends on the interest taken by the Guardians; on the temperament of the responsible officials; on the financial resources of the District, and on the suitability of the buildings. But as has already been pointed out, the administration of a mixed workhouse has cast upon the Guardians an almost impossible task. The following extracts taken from descriptions of visits made by Committees of our number to workhouses in different parts of Ireland, may be taken as illustrative of the varying conditions which obtain at the present time:—

Visits to Irish Workhouses.

This workhouse contains accommodation for about 500 inmates, but was little more than half full at the time of the visit. The master and matron have only held office for a year. The master was the son of a farmer and had had no experience previous to his appointment. Full of enthusiasm, the condition of the workhouse reflects great credit on them. Throughout it was kept scrupulously clean. The inmates are mainly aged and infirm persons. The men, whose wards are supplied with hot and cold water, are bathed once a week. One particularly pleasing feature of the establishment was the infirm wards for women, which are quite separate from the rest of the workhouse, although within the same curtilage. These wards are an outstanding example of how much comfort can be obtained for a trifling expenditure. Situated on rising ground, they are merely temporary wooden sheds, which have been converted into infirm wards. These are beautifully kept; the bed pillows have frills round them, each inmate has a clean towel to herself, and a locker for little personal belongings. A general air of cheerfulness and homeliness pervaded the whole place. The only criticism that might be made about the wards is that they have no water supply—any water that may be needed having to be carried.

The sick wards, containing 75 inmates at the time of the visit, are old but nicely kept. They are in charge of five nuns, one of whom is unpaid. There are also two trained nurses—one for day and the other for night duty. A fine operating room and well stocked surgery are attached to the infirmary. The infirmary has also its separate kitchen, the cooking being supervised by the nuns. (1)

Beautifully situated, this workhouse is of the ordinary Irish type, but badly kept and characterised by a general laxness of administration. It has accommodation for 520 inmates and was occupied by 476 at the date of visit. The master, 38 years of age, is the son of a farmer in the neighbourhood, and had had no experience of Poor Law work previous to his appointment. The matron, 35 years of age, was appointed at the same time as the master. Altogether there are 12 paid officers in the workhouse, including the night nurse, but excluding the nuns who look after the sick.

1 *Vide* Visits, Ireland, No. 296.

The dining hall is very old, and not well lighted. The kitchen, on the other hand, has plenty of light, but is dirty.

The hospital seemed to be generally overcrowded. A male ward on the ground floor was exceedingly dirty. Upstairs the sick wards were clean but overcrowded.

* * * * *

Altogether the establishment left a depressing effect on one's mind, and its management was neither creditable to the superior officers in charge nor to the Guardians on whose shoulders the ultimate responsibility rests."¹

We attended a meeting of the Board of Guardians; some were present. The proceedings were almost tumultuous at times, but were characterised by great good temper, and the decisions as a rule were sensible. We noticed:—

(i) That the difficulty of dealing with obstinate cases of sickness in the absence of compulsory power is much felt.

(ii) That the prohibition of outdoor relief to occupiers of land is very effective.

(iii) That the boarding-out system is attracting the attention and favour with Guardians.

(iv) That phthisis is recognised as a cause of destitution and a growing cause.

We visited the workhouse throughout. The master has been in office some years, and enjoys general confidence. The management is largely in the hands of Sisters, a system which is very economical, and which results in far more elasticity and, if the word may be allowed, *camaraderie* than English officialism. As compared with English workhouses the standard of comfort was certainly low, *e.g.*, in many of the dormitories beds were laid on the floor, there was a complete want of sanitary conveniences, and no attempt was made to interest or employ the inmates."²

The Committee visited the workhouse. It is a large building, capable of holding over eight hundred, but with only about three hundred inmates; roughly one-third in the infirmary, two-thirds in the house. It was exceedingly bare and prison-like, with very narrow passages. So far as depended on scrubbing, the place was exquisitely clean, but turning up the mattresses in the infirmary revealed hoards of dust and messy scraps. In the body of the house there are few bedsteads; the inmates sleep on straw mattresses on the floor. Considerable improvements are being made in the infirmary; windows opened out, wards enlarged, etc. We saw it under difficult conditions, the doctors and nurses being away in , giving evidence in a law suit brought by the Guardians for an injunction to prevent one of their number from entering the infirmary. The maternity ward is very inadequate. Only two patients in, and no accommodation for more. We were told that no married woman would think of coming in, but later on we came across a young married woman, who had been brought up in the workhouse, and had come in for her confinement, in order to be with her mother, a permanent pauper.

There are fifty children in the house. Some of the older ones go out to school, but there are both schoolmaster and schoolmistress. We saw some of the children having religious instruction; they looked fat and healthy; the clothing which they wore was ragged, and their clothing they were not wearing was dirty and untidy. A Commissioner talked to the schoolmaster about their prospects, which he said were very poor. There is no attempt at industrial training, and though the officials try to find places for them, the Guardians take no interest in them after they leave, and they frequently return to the house as paupers. The matron confirmed this, saying they had three married couples who had been brought up in the house, they have families in the house, and go out occasionally and bring in an addition to the family. One of these couples recently set upon the matron and beat her nearly to death.

The childrens' dormitories here, as in other places, are in the roof, with much partition work, and very liable to fire. The children are locked in at night, but this is thought to be safe because the schoolmistress sleeps near with a key.

The tramp wards were ordinary; the upright locked bath was there, but not used. Tramps are put to work on land or about the house.

Only £4 a week is given in out-relief in this Union, and that only to cases which cannot be moved.

The salient points about this and other workhouses visited appear to be:—

1. It is admitted on all hands that the children brought up in the workhouse tend to return as paupers.
2. Some attempt, more or less adequate, is generally made to provide special accommodation for phthisical cases.
3. The doctors are very anxious to dissociate the infirmary from the workhouse, and to develop it into a district hospital which will be attractive to the working class.

The Commissioners afterwards attended a meeting of the Board. There was a large attendance, but practically no business was done, owing to the obstructive methods of one lady member. This is an illustration of the fact, that whilst lady Guardians can, if well disposed, do much to improve Poor Law administration, if, on the other hand, they are obstructive and quarrelsome, they can defy procedure and rules, which men would be compelled to obey."³

¹ *Vide* Visits, Ireland, No. 297.

² *Vide* Visits, Ireland, No. 276.

³ *Vide* Visits, Ireland, No. 245.

The workhouse premises were the usual type; but though clean throughout, were perhaps even barer than usual, the walls being actually unplastered. There was no bathroom or water closet in the workhouse. The old people were of the normal type, and the able-bodied were as usual absent. The children, eight boys and girls, were taught together in the workhouse by a female teacher, and the school was inspected by the Education Board's inspectors. The children looked well and happy. Indeed, we gathered that they so liked the workhouse life that they did not at all like leaving it. We saw a bright, nice-looking girl of sixteen in the house who had been twice out to service and each time returned because she "did not like" service.

We observed here as elsewhere that the old women, young women, and babies all occupied the same quarters in the workhouse. This practice possibly makes the workhouse approximate more closely to family life than where classification is more strictly enforced, and may conceivably detract from the deterrence of the institution for the young."¹

A Commissioner went round the infirmary with the doctor. He is working under great difficulties with a Board which declines to make improvements. There is no sanitary accommodation inside this infirmary and no baths. The Board has also quarrelled with the town authority, which has cut off water and gas, and although the town reservoir almost adjoins their walls, the water for the house has to be pumped on the grounds, and oil lamps are used for lighting.

There is one nurse and a probationer, and a paid wardswoman for about thirty patients. The wards are small, but new windows have been put in and the walls painted, and the doctor is gradually moving things forward. He is an enthusiast for a milk diet, and keeps his patients mainly on milk; he has no great belief in drugs. He is preparing a consumptive ward. He is very desirous of dissociating the infirmary from the workhouse.

The nursery here is even more dreary than usual, having a stone floor. I suggested the possibility of mats or rugs, but was told the inspectors objected."⁽²⁾

178. Much of what we have already said in our main Report in reference to the general mixed workhouse, and the system of indoor relief in England is applicable to Ireland. It is well known that the idea of the general workhouse was introduced into Ireland from England, and that never in the history of Poor Law in Ireland did it satisfy the needs or sentiment of the Irish people. In justice, however, to the Royal Commission of 1832, we should repeat that it never intended that the workhouse should be the miscellaneous institution which exists at the present day. The Commission chiefly had in view the establishment of a place where the able-bodied might be set to work under conditions the least harmful both to themselves and to the independent labourer. But in England, institutions for classes other than for the able-bodied were to be provided, and it was contemplated that the old village workhouses would still form part of the Poor Law machinery of the Union, each workhouse being used for a particular class, thus avoiding that aggregation of different types of persons under the same administration, within the same curtilage which we have so strongly condemned. If the principle of classification, not only *in* institutions, but *by* institutions had been carried into effect, Ireland would have been spared not only a great expenditure of capital, but Poor Law Administration would have been in harmony with, and not contrary to, the kindly sympathies of the Irish people.

179. In our report for England and Wales we have recommended that the system of Public Assistance should include processes of help, preventive, curative and restorative, and that every inmate of an institution should be regarded by those responsible, not as an "indoor pauper," but as an individual requiring particular assistance adapted to particular needs. Accordingly we have recommended, (and in this we concur with the opinions of the Vice-Regal Commission), the abolition of the old mixed workhouse, and, instead, the classification of its inmates *by* and *in* institutions. But this treatment of individuals involves a distribution of cases amongst officials and voluntary workers so as to permit of time, thought and attention being given to particular needs. In order to make effective provision for this method of treatment, Public Assistance Authorities will have to devote much attention, especially in the great centres of population, to the encouragement of Voluntary Aid Councils, or to co-operation with existing Voluntary Organisations, so that the devoutly and charitably disposed may, so far as is practicable by common effort, restore to the *status* of independence those who, for any reason, have been compelled to seek institutional relief.

180. When the general workhouses have been abolished, the disused workhouses, as the Vice-Regal Commission recommends, can then be used for particular classes of poor:—*e.g.*

(1) Children (when necessary).

(2) Aged and infirm.

Disused
Workhouses

¹ *Vide* Visits, Ireland, No. 263A.

² *Vide* Visits, Ireland No. 263B.

- (3) Sick.
- (4) Able-bodied men including Casuals and Vagrants (when necessary).
- (5) Able-bodied women including Casuals and Vagrants (when necessary).
- (6) Feeble-minded.
- (7) Epileptics.

181. We desire to point out that when classification by institutions shall have been adopted there will still be urgent necessity for a periodical revision of institutional cases by the Public Assistance Committee, should the Public Assistance Authority deem it desirable to hand over to them the detailed administration of the institution in question. Experience in England has shown that whenever the expedient of a "workhouse call-over" has been undertaken cases have been discovered of certain indoor paupers existing only in the workhouse books, having in the body long since departed from the institution. We have no evidence to show that such failure in administrative efficiency obtains in Ireland, but we desire to record our conviction that this periodic revision is indispensable.

(b) OUTDOOR RELIEF.

182. As stated in an earlier paragraph, the Poor Relief Act of 1838 provided for relief only in the workhouse. During the discussions that preceded the passing of that measure all parties appear to have been impressed with the necessity of absolutely prohibiting outdoor relief. The danger that would arise from any relaxation of the rule was urged by men of the highest authority. "Outdoor relief," Sir George Cornewall Lewis wrote, "when once established, opens an indefinite career to abuse; the wit of man cannot foresee a tithe of the evils to which, under peculiar circumstances, it may give rise. The united sagacity of the whole human race could not, in the reign of Elizabeth, have predicted the varied and subtle forms of mischief which are developed in the Report of the English Poor Law Commission of Inquiry." Similar views were urged in Parliament and out of it, and ultimately prevailed in the framing of the original Act. A Committee of the House of Commons in 1846 stated that they did "not hesitate in expressing their decided opinion that the introduction of any system of outdoor relief would be dangerous to the general interests of the community, and more particularly to the interests of the very class for whose well-being such relief was intended."

183. The famine of 1846-7 overtaxed the resources of Poor Law administration. This breakdown of the workhouse system was the ground upon which the Legislature consented to relax the principle of the original Poor Law by authorising the administration of outdoor relief. The discussion that took place in both Houses of Parliament upon the introduction of the Relief Extension Act of 1847 indicates very plainly that the Government by which it was introduced, as well as the minority by which it was opposed, were fully sensible of the danger involved in such a proposal. That such a change should be only of a temporary character was admitted by all. An amendment limiting its duration was adopted, and although this amendment was subsequently rescinded on the motion of Lord Lansdowne, the expediency of reconsidering the measure at some future time was fully recognised by the Government.

184. The Poor Relief Extension Act of 1847 authorised the Guardians to grant either indoor or outdoor relief:—

Section 1.—At all times, at their discretion, to destitute poor persons either permanently disabled from labour by age or infirmity, etc., or temporarily disabled by sickness, or accident, and to destitute poor widows having two or more legitimate children dependent upon them.

Section 2.—Under special circumstances, and for limited periods, to such other classes as might be designated by Orders to be temporarily issued from time to time by the Central Authority. The special powers conferred by this latter section could, however, only be exercised by the Central Authority in the event of the workhouse being full or rendered unfit for occupation by the prevalence of infectious diseases, etc.

Section 7.—The relieving officer was authorised to afford between the meetings of the Board of Guardians "provisional relief," in any of the forms therein prescribed, to any destitute person, to whatever class belonging, in all cases of "sudden and urgent necessity."

Classes to which outdoor relief may be granted.

Section 11.—Required that an outdoor relief register to be kept and submitted to the Guardians at each meeting.

The subsequent Act, 11 & 12 Vict., c. 47, 1848, enabled the relieving officer to afford temporary relief in any of the forms mentioned, to persons who had become destitute by reason of eviction from their holdings, and the Guardians were authorised to grant such persons outdoor relief for a period of one calendar month.

185. The Poor Law Union and Lunacy Inquiry Commission (Ireland), 1879, deal exhaustively with the subject of outdoor relief. The Commissioners consider that: "Indoor relief in Ireland is the strict Poor Law relief of destitution, of the extent of which it is a very accurate gauge. Outdoor is, or rather is intended to be, the charitable relief of poverty, the extent of which it is impossible to gauge. The confounding of these—destitution with poverty—legal relief with charity—is at the root, as it has been often observed, of the maladministration of all Poor Laws, acting as an encouragement to imposture, while it robs of its voluntary character whatever assistance may be given from benevolent motives to deserving poor. . . . An argument constantly urged in favour of substituting outdoor for indoor relief is that it is cheaper—a pauper will be satisfied to accept 1s. a week out-relief, whose maintenance in the workhouse would cost at least 3s. No more effectual plan could be hit upon for the manufacturing of pauperism than by the practical application of such methods. . . . In many unions in which outdoor relief has been introduced there has been a sensible increase of pauperism and expenditure, while in those unions which have adhered to the system of indoor relief there has been a sensible decrease of pauperism in every union and of expenditure in all save two."

Area of charge
for outdoor relief.

186. The Vice-Regal Commission state that the general feeling of the witnesses examined was in favour of an extension of outdoor relief, on the grounds that it would be better for the poor and be more economical for the ratepayers, with the proviso in most instances that the area of charge should be fixed as the electoral division instead of the wider area of the Union. The Commission observe: "The experience, however, of all countries in which an outdoor system of relief has been tried is that it is only by the self-sacrificing and constant care of officials, of honorary committees and inspectors, as at Elberfeld, or as in the case of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Ireland, that an outdoor relief system can be worked with a minimum of abuses and with economy. Multitudes everywhere are eager applicants for relief in their own homes, whose circumstances do not bring them at all to that state of destitution in which they would feel obliged to give up their homes and become inmates of an institution. The contraction of the area of charge might be of some efficacy in keeping down expenditure, but even with the electoral division as the area, the expenditure for the year ended September, 1896, reached the amount of £185,936, the number of persons in receipt of outdoor relief being 56,619. . . . We believe that such restriction would have a tendency towards keeping down expenditure, but we fear it would not be sufficient. . . . Under the proposed new system, the alternative to giving outdoor relief would be an offer of admission to the 'almshouse' or 'labour house' with boarding-out of children."

187. The following are our chief recommendations in regard to outdoor relief or as we propose to call it Home Assistance:

That out-relief be given only after thorough inquiry, except in cases of sudden or urgent necessity.

That it should be adequate to meet the needs of those to whom it is given.

That persons so assisted should be subject to supervision.

That, with a view to inquiry and supervision, the case paper¹ system be everywhere adopted.

¹ Under the ordinary system no continuous record is kept of an applicant and his family; at every application he is entered afresh in the application and report book of the relieving officer, and where this book is not indexed, it depends entirely upon the memory of the relieving officer how much of the applicant's past history is brought before the Guardians. When a new relieving officer succeeds to the work, the cases to him are all new, and unless he goes through the application and report books of his predecessor he has no means of tracing their previous history.

Under the case paper system every application is recorded on the same set of papers, which thus constitute a running history of the case; every set of case papers is indexed, and can be turned up by anyone who is dealing with the case; into whatever institution the applicant may be sent his history goes with him. The system takes some trouble to start, but once initiated it is generally acknowledged to be much more effective and more simple than the old. *Vide* Appendix Vol. XXV., Part XIX.

That aged recipients of out-relief should be periodically visited both by officers of the local authority (who might be women), and by voluntary visitors, as may be arranged with a local committee for voluntary aid.

That such supervision should include in its purview the conditions, moral and sanitary, under which the recipient is living; it should be a condition of out-relief that the recipients are living respectable lives in decent houses, and, as a step towards this, the Public Assistance Authority should have power to refuse relief in certain areas where the conditions of living are bad.

The provision which obtains in London, that it is the duty of the relieving officer to inform the Sanitary Authority of overcrowded and insanitary premises, should be extended to Ireland and enforced, and the Public Assistance Authority should be required, if the Sanitary Authority refuses to take action, to report the fact to the Local Government Board.

Power should be given to the Public Assistance Authority, under due precautions, to remove persons in receipt of outdoor relief who are living in a state of neglect, to an Institution.

Every case of out-relief to widows should have special and individual attention. Widows with only one legitimate child should not be ineligible for outdoor relief.

Outdoor relief should not, except in special cases, be granted to any woman deserted by her husband during the first twelve months after desertion.

There should be systematic co-operation between the Public Assistance Authorities and recognised Voluntary Aid Committees, where they exist, in the care and treatment of cases of distress, and voluntary agencies should be utilised as far as possible for the personal care of individual cases.

(c) *Rating Area for Outdoor Relief.*

188. The Vice-Regal Commission, while recommending County rating for most forms of Poor Law expenditure, suggested a return to electoral division rating for the purposes of outdoor relief. The operation of the Old-Age Pensions Act will by degrees diminish greatly the outdoor relief lists, and hence the question of outdoor relief is now of much less importance than it was at the date of their Report. Moreover, the system of two separate rating areas—the County for institutional assistance and the numerous electoral divisions within the same County for Home Assistance—is not free from complications and complexities. The apprehension commonly entertained that the widening of the area of charge from the electoral division to the Union would lead to a great increase in the number of the recipients of outdoor relief has not been justified by experience. The Local Government Act came into operation in 1899; we have, therefore, a longer period on which to base our opinion, than had the Vice-Regal Commission. In the eight years, 1900–1907, the average daily number in receipt of outdoor relief was 57,997; in the last eight years of electoral division rating the average number was 58,404; and in the eight previous years, 63,215. It is true that the amount expended on outdoor relief has increased since 1898, but the increase of expenditure on indoor relief during the same period has been more continuous, more rapid, and in a much higher ratio. As the extension of rating from the electoral division to the Union has not led to an increase in the number of those receiving out-relief, we see no reason to apprehend that a further extension of the rating area shall produce any such result. Taking into consideration those new facts which have emerged for the last three years, we are of opinion that the County and County Borough should be in Ireland the area of rating for all forms of public assistance.

(d) EMIGRATION.

189. Provisions for assisting emigration were made by the original Poor Law Relief Act of 1838 (Secs. 51, 89–90); and also by the following enactments:—

6 & 7 Vict. c. 92 (Sec. 18); 10 Vict. c. 31 (Secs. 13, 14, 15); 12 & 13 Vict. c. 104, 1849 (Secs. 26, 27, and 28); 45 & 46 Vict. c. 47. [Arrears of Rent (Ireland) Act 1882, (Secs. 18 & 20)]; 46 & 47 Vict. c. 43 (Sec. 12).

The only one of these enactments at present operative is the Act of 1849, under which Guardians, with the consent of the Central Authority, can assist poor persons resident in their Union to emigrate. This is practically confined to persons having friends or relations in America, who have sent a portion of the sum necessary to defray the cost of emigration.

The number of persons emigrated under the provisions of this Act in each year is given in the Annual Reports of the Local Government Board. The total number from 1851 to 1907, was 44,801 and the amount advanced out of the rates was £161,550.

OTHER FORMS OF ASSISTANCE.

(c) UNEMPLOYED WORKMEN ACT, 1905.

190. This Act has already been described in Part VI. of our Report for England and Wales. During the first year, after the passing of the Act, none of the distress committees constituted by the Local Government Board for Ireland took advantage of its provisions. During the year ended March, 1907, however, a sum of £200,000 was voted by Parliament for the purposes of the Act, and £11,050 of this sum was allocated to Ireland. Distress committees were then formed by the urban districts of Dublin, Drogheda, Galway and Ennis. A sum of £2,750 was expended in the aid of distress in these districts, and the balance of the grant was employed in the relief of exceptional distress in rural areas in the west of Ireland in which temporary distress committees, under Sec. 3 of the Act, had been formed. In the following year no definite allocation of any funds was made to Ireland, each application being dealt with on its merits. During this year the committees of the urban districts named obtained grants to the extent of £2,600, and a sum of £1,900 was allocated to temporary committees constituted in six small towns in the counties of Galway and Mayo.

191. Our special investigator, Mr. Cyril Jackson, observes :—

The Unemployed Workmen Act was extended without change to Ireland at the time of its passage through the House of Commons, and its administration was placed under the charge of the Irish Local Government Board. The orders of the Board follow the main lines of those issued by the English office. The principal difference is in the qualifications required in selected applicants and the amount of inquiry directed to be made. The English order lays it down that selected men shall be of good character and shall not have been in receipt of Poor Law relief within the twelve months preceding application. These clauses do not appear in the Irish order. Further, the English Distress Committees are directed to make inquiry at the applicant's home and to receive a report from the relieving officer for the district. The Irish Committees are directed to cause such inquiry to be made . . . as . . . to satisfy themselves that the case is one which they may, with due observance of the requirements of the Act, properly entertain. Besides minor differences the only other of importance is that in Ireland the principle was not laid down as in England, that the average weekly wages upon relief works were to be less than those of an unskilled labourer in continuous work. The Act was adopted practically in only four towns—Dublin, Drogheda, Galway and Ennis, and in the first of these alone was there any large amount of relief work provided.

In 1905–6 distress committees were formed in Cork and Belfast, but not in Dublin. There seems from the first to have been a very general distrust of the Act. Its main features—the supplementation of local charitable money out of a central fund, the whole being administered after careful inquiry at the expense of the rates—seem to have repelled the local bodies who would have had to put the Act in force. In a correspondence which passed between the authorities of Cork and the Local Government Board, the number of questions to be answered before the subject of a grant could be reached led the former to the conclusion that the Act was totally inapplicable to the conditions existing in Cork, a conclusion founded upon the somewhat irrelevant consideration that a $\frac{1}{2}$ d. rate would not realise more than £350, and that such a sum was “inadequate to meet the distress.” Eventually the Cork Distress Committee decided to take no active steps, and the Act became a dead letter. The distress committee in Belfast also failed to put the Act into force, and in the following year did not meet.¹

The Corporation of Dublin decided on December 13th, 1905, not to adopt the Unemployed Workmen Act, in spite of the pressure brought to bear upon them by the Trades Council and the Philanthropic Reform Association. An account of the efforts of that society and of the committee which they were able to form will be found on p. 22. This committee received a grant of £500 from the portion of the Queen's Fund allotted to Ireland. The rest of this fund—about £5,000—remained still unspent at the end of the year, and is being used for the relief works in the West of Ireland.

“During the winter, 1906–7, distress committees were formed and actually provided employment in the four places already mentioned, Dublin, Drogheda, Galway and Ennis.

¹ Distress committees were formed in 1905–6 at Clonmel, Dundalk, Kilkenny, Londonderry and Waterford, but either did not meet or took no action. At Pembroke and Rathmines—suburbs of Dublin—distress committees were also formed. At the latter place ninety-one men registered, fifty-four cases were investigated, eighteen were found ineligible and seven cancelled.

On November 23rd, 1906, the Dublin Corporation reversed their decision of the previous year and decided to set up a Distress Committee under the Act. Voluntary subscriptions to the amount of £210 were collected and grants amounting to £1,750 were received from the Local Government Board out of the £11,000 allotted to Ireland from the £200,000 voted by Parliament for the relief of unemployment. Offices were taken and a clerk with eight assistants appointed. To March 31st, 1907, over 4,000 entries were made on the register. At first very little investigation was made into the cases. Between December 1906, and February, 1907, the men left their names at the office, and subsequently received a visit from one of the investigation officers. Cases for investigation were chosen indiscriminately, one in each ten being taken and, at a later date, the early cases consecutively. It was stated that out of the second hundred chosen (the numbers, two, twelve, twenty-two, etc.) seventeen were found to be duplicates. This arose from the fact that any number of persons interested in a case might enter the name of an applicant upon the register. When the committee had been at work for some time the previous employers of the applicants were communicated with, and men with definitely unsatisfactory references or without references were rejected. It appears, however, that occasionally a personal recommendation was sufficient. Inquiry was made in some cases after the men had been set to work, and it is stated that in such cases the results of the investigation would not lead to dismissal from work. In February, 1907, it became the practice of the committee to summon applicants to the office in order to fill up their application forms. From that time, therefore, there would be no visits paid to the home. Little attention seems to have been paid to the report upon the condition of the men's homes. The residential qualification period was fixed at two years, and the clerk to the committee stated that inquiry into length of residence would be made "whenever there was thought to be any doubt." The committee seem to have done their best with the inexperienced clerks and investigation officers at their disposal. These men were chosen from among the applicants for relief work, and were naturally quite unused to making careful and responsible inquiry. There seems to be no doubt that very much greater care and a nicer discrimination were used in choosing men for work towards the end of the committee's activities than during the first two or three months. The committee, unfortunately, were unable to complete their inquiries into all the cases. Three thousand five hundred and forty-seven applications for relief were received, and of these 1,550 were not investigated or given further consideration. Applications were not received after January 31st, 1907. Work was provided upon cleaning lanes which were not in the ordinary course of things in the charge of the corporation's surveyor, on demolishing houses and on road-making. For this last work a body of about 150 men had continuous work for about four weeks. These men were chosen from among the builders' labourers applying to the committee. On this and other work the wages paid were 4d. an hour for ten hours a day. On work other than road-making men were given four or five days' work and would not be employed for a second spell unless their names were entered more than once on the register and the fact was not discovered. All wages were paid out of the distress committee's funds, the corporation providing supervision. The quality of the men's work is said to have been good. One thousand two hundred and fifty-one "persons registered under the Act" were given work in January, 1907, and 159 in March.

Drogheda is said to have suffered from unusually severe depression during the winter of 1906-7, and the Unemployed Workmen Act was adopted in the autumn of 1906. The Local Government Board undertook to grant an amount proportionate to any sum raised locally. A 'coal fund'—the first that had been started for five years—was opened, and £200 collected; £50 was granted by the Harbour Committee and a grant of £200 obtained from the Local Government Board. Work upon an extension to one of the municipal reservoirs was undertaken, and men were employed during the last week in March and the first three weeks of April. A register was opened and 210 names were taken. Name, address, age, condition as to marriage and particulars of dependants were entered on the record papers and no other inquiries were made. The superintendent—an officer of the corporation—sent to the relief works all men whose circumstances seemed to demand relief, and in most cases his personal knowledge was sufficient to guide him to a conclusion. The men were employed continuously throughout the work at a weekly wage of 12s., the usual rate being 16s. The corporation provided all materials and tools to the value of £100. We saw the men at work, and they appeared to be working fairly well. The superintendent stated that he had no complaint to make as to their diligence, but that they required careful supervision. It appeared that a certain number of the men had left the work and had sought employment elsewhere. It was suggested that the distance of the work from the town—3 miles—together with the fact that they had no boots, led them to do so.

At Ennis a distress committee was formed in December, 1906. The matter had not been considered in the previous year, and the town council appears to have been influenced by the possibility of obtaining a grant from the Local Government Board. Local subscriptions realised about £6 and a grant of £100 was received. About 150 men applied, and of these about half were allowed to fill up the record paper and were given work. The men were personally known to members of the committee and no inquiry was made into their circumstances. Work upon forming a footpath in the town was begun in January and about twenty men employed at a time, each man receiving one week's work in three. Wages at the rate of 10s. a week were offered and at first refused, but when it became known that a higher rate would not be offered there was a rush to get the work.

"The Galway Distress Committee obtained a grant of £700 and raised £300 in local subscriptions. The town steward undertook the management of the work and personally selected the men. The work consisted of the partial reclamation of about thirty acres of land. Two hundred and sixty-nine applications for work were received and record papers were filled up. Name, address, age, ordinary occupation, whether married or single, particulars of dependants, rent, number of rooms and in a very few cases the name of a previous employer were entered. No further inquiry was made, but most of the men were known personally to the town steward and the rest brought a letter from their priest or minister. Practically all the men who were in distress were put on to the work, but those who worked badly were turned off and taken on again at a later date. One hundred and ninety-eight men were at work in Christmas week. This number was soon reduced to 100, and in the second week in April forty-one men were employed.

The total number of men employed was over 200. Wages were paid at the rate of 2s. a day. About fifty of the men were found to be unusually good at the work, and these were employed for alternate weeks, the rest were given three days' work in a fortnight. Not more than one man was employed from a family. The district council provided materials and allowed one of their staff to assist the town steward in supervising the work. The work of reclamation unfortunately cannot be finished with existing funds, and it is as yet uncertain whether the district council will be willing to incur the responsibility."

192. Mr. Jackson concludes his Report on unemployment in Irish towns by stating that it was unwise to extend to Ireland a measure intended to be worked under English conditions.

Rural Distress
Committees.

193. It is mentioned in Mr. Jackson's report that a certain number of distress committees were formed in rural districts. The partial failure of the potato crop had led to widespread distress, and some form of relief works seemed necessary if the people were to be kept out of the workhouse. The distress committees which were established consisted in the Belmullet and Swineford Unions of the boards of guardians; in the other districts special committees, including priests, guardians and others, were formed. The people were employed at works of public utility such as the making of roads and building fences. Mr. Jackson remarks as regards the works in the populous districts of Connemara as follows :—

In the Clifden district the holdings were very small and the ground poor—a mere layer of peaty soil over rock. There the men were paid in cash (1s. 6d. a day) and those we saw at work appeared to be a good type of peasantry and to be working very well on the road-making on which they were engaged, a track over boggy ground to the cemetery at Dolan and to the sea-shore. One hundred men were working under four gangers.

"We saw some small works employing twenty eight men in progress at the racecourse close to Clifden, and we also saw some of the work which had been done in other places (Letterfrack, Renvyle, Roundstone, etc.). The pay sheets for the week ending April 6th, 1907, show the following particulars as to works under the Clifden Distress Committee.

| | Men. | Wages. |
|---|------|---------|
| | | £ s. d. |
| Road making, Dolan and Horn - - - - - | 86 | 16 16 0 |
| " " Racecourse - - - - - | 27 | 4 11 6 |
| " " to pier, Downloughan - - - - - | 63 | 12 11 0 |
| " " Letterden - - - - - | 10 | 2 18 0 |
| School building, Innisturk Island - - - - - | 23 | 9 18 0 |
| Work at Innishturbot - - - - - | 22 | 10 1 0 |
| Boat slip, Coolacloy - - - - - | 27 | 6 11 0 |
| Work at Ballyfadden - - - - - | 37 | 8 4 0 |

"The 300 men employed were all that needed relief of the 1,200 families in these parishes. At all times they have a hard life, and any partial failure of the crops reduces them to the verge of starvation. Only one member of each family was employed, and women were excluded, though some applied to be taken on.

"We cannot help feeling that the expenditure of the relief money in the country districts has been a wise arrangement on many grounds. The dearth of labourers is becoming marked in some parts of rural Ireland, while the number of able-bodied unemployed in Dublin shows that the capital has, as usual, a fatal attraction for young men. To have spent the whole of the Treasury Grant in the cities of Ireland might have tended still further to deplete the country districts. In England no relief has been given to country labourers unemployed in the winter months, and though the time limit of residential qualification has prevented their sharing in the relief works of the towns immediately on their arrival, they have no doubt continued to flock into them, and have probably displaced the less strong of the town labourers, and driven them to the relief works. The grant made to Ireland has been spent to better advantage in the country districts, and we may hope has to some slight extent counteracted the tendency of migration to Dublin.

194. Our recommendation with reference to the discontinuance of the Unemployed Workmen Act in England applies equally to Ireland. It is probable that the Unemployed Workmen Act would not have been put into operation in Ireland save for the purpose of expending the money voted by Parliament each year for Distress Committees. It seems to us that the Act as thus applied presents most, if not all, the objectionable features, referred to in par. 116, which the experience of 1880 to 1898 showed to exist in the administration of relief measures financed entirely by the State without any contribution from local rates. The experience of those years led to the enactment of Section 13 of

the Local Government Act, 1898, a permanent provision for relief of exceptional distress in Ireland, from whatever cause arising. It lays down the principle that the Local Authorities must have an interest in the judicious and economical administration of relief, and that to secure this, they should bear a proportionate share of the cost of all relief operations. In our opinion this principle should be adhered to in all cases where State subsidies are given for relief of exceptional distress.

195. The industrial and economic conditions of England and Ireland are completely different. Of the population in England and Wales, 77 per cent. is urban, and 23 per cent. is rural. Of the population in Ireland, 30 per cent. is urban, and 70 per cent. is rural. Moreover, the population classed as urban in Ireland participates, to a large extent, in the character of a rural rather than of an urban population. The towns of Ireland are, as a rule, small gatherings of 2,000, 3,000, or 4,000 people. There are only two considerable aggregations of population in Ireland—Dublin and Belfast. Dublin and its townships—Rathmines and Rathgar, Pembroke and Blackrock—have a population of 357,848, and Belfast (which recently extended its boundaries), 349,180. The third city in Ireland, Cork, has only 76,122, and is far exceeded in population by places so little heard of in Ireland, as Rhondda, Leyton, Walsall, Leith and Paisley.

196. The great mass of the population in England and Wales are occupied in industrial works and live on daily wages, or provide for the wants of, and perform services for, those who earn daily wages. The great majority of the people of Ireland neither receive a daily wage, nor depend on wage-earners. They are engaged in the cultivation of their agricultural holdings, or cater for the wants of and perform services for, the cultivators. Unemployment in industrial work is a main cause of distress in England; unfavourable weather, storms and floods, and disease in animals and plants are the ordinary causes of distress in Ireland. The prosperity of an industrial population is abounding, when they sell at a high price and in an eager market all the articles they manufacture, and procure a sufficiency of food at a low price. The prosperity of an agricultural community is at its zenith, when having produced a great abundance of food stuffs, and having supplied their own wants, they sell the surplus at a high price in a quick market, and buy the manufactured articles they require at a low price. Hence the conditions and interests of England and Ireland are not only utterly dissimilar, but, to some extent, antagonistic. The *prima facie* conclusion is that any system or arrangement that suits a purely agricultural population will be unsuitable for a purely industrial population; and that an identical system cannot be simultaneously advantageous to England and to Ireland.

197. Except in the Highlands, and Islands the conditions in Scotland are similar to those in England. Three-fourths of the population and two-thirds of the rateable value of Scotland have been concentrated in four limited areas, around Glasgow, Dundee, Edinburgh, and Aberdeen.

198. The recommendations we make for meeting or mitigating unemployment in Great Britain, such as Labour Exchanges and Unemployment Insurance, do not seem adapted to the conditions of Ireland which is almost exclusively an agricultural country, with wants still, to a large extent, the same as they were reported by the Irish Royal Commission to have been in 1833-36, viz:—that its natural resources should be developed, and its wealth thereby increased. Into the means of doing so, by the revival of Irish industries, the extension of small economic holdings resulting from the division of the grazing ranches, the draining of lands, the afforestation of the waste lands, and other similar projects, we have not inquired, and have had no evidence before us. We therefore think it advisable to postpone applying to Ireland the measures which we have advocated in regard to unemployment in England, at any rate until the results of their operation has been ascertained in Great Britain.

Labour
Exchanges and
Unemployment
Insurance.

(f) LABOURERS ACTS.

199. We have already referred to the special provisions for relieving exceptional distress under Section 13 of the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898, and powers of assisting poor districts possessed by the Congested Districts Board. It seems also desirable that reference should be made to the Labourers Acts, for although they cannot properly

be regarded as Poor Laws, yet they are very closely connected therewith and have been the means of affording indirectly assistance out of the rates to a large number of persons; moreover, these Acts may be said to be administered by the Boards of Guardians inasmuch as these bodies are composed of the members of the Rural District Councils, who are the local authorities directly entrusted with the administration of the Acts.

200. The express object of the Labourers Acts was to better the condition of agricultural labourers in Ireland, by providing for them suitable dwellings and garden allotments. The Acts apply to rural districts only, *i.e.*, to the several Poor Law Unions in Ireland exclusive of such portions thereof as may be included in urban districts and so far as is consistent with the scope and tenor thereof, are to be construed as one with the Public Health (I.) Act 1878.

Under the Labourers Act 46 & 47 Vic. c. 60, 1883, any twelve persons rated for the relief of the poor could represent to the rural sanitary authority that in the portion of the sanitary district in which they resided the existing house accommodation for agricultural labourers was deficient, or that the existing dwellings were unfit for human habitation. If the sanitary authority were satisfied with the truth of these representations, they could make an "improvement scheme" for the erection of new dwellings with garden allotments thereto, not exceeding half a statute acre in each case. They could propose to purchase the necessary land by agreement, or in pursuance of the compulsory powers of the Land Clause Acts. The area of charge for the expenses of the scheme was subject to the approval of the Local Government Board, and in no case could a higher rate than 1s. in the £ be imposed in any one year for the purposes of this Act. The Local Government Board might refuse to confirm the scheme or might make a Provisional Order confirming the whole or a portion of the scheme. Loans for the purpose of the scheme were obtainable from the Commissioners of Public Works, on the security of the rates leviable on the area of charge.

On completion of the scheme the sanitary authority were to make lettings of the tenements to agricultural labourers upon such terms and conditions that the tenancies created by such lettings should be "cottier tenancies" within the meaning of Sec. 81 of the Landlord and Tenant Law Amendment Act (I) 1860.

The Labourers (I) Act 1885 provided, *inter alia*, that existing houses could be acquired and repaired if necessary and gardens not exceeding half an acre provided therefor. Tracts of land might be taken by agreement for the purpose of being parcelled out into allotments for the use of agricultural labourers living in any neighbouring village or town.

A further Act was passed in 1886 to remove minor difficulties which had arisen under the previous Acts.

201. By the Act 54 and 55 Vic. c. 71, 1891, an important change was made in the previous procedure. Hitherto representations with a view to putting the Acts into force had to be made by the ratepayers, but this Act allowed a representation to be made by any twelve persons, whether rated or not, provided that if not so rated they were agricultural labourers within the meaning of the Acts, and were employed in the district at the date of the application. It furthermore gave the parties so signing, in case the sanitary authority declined to act on the representation, the right of appeal to the Local Government Board who could direct a local inquiry. If it appeared that the representation was correct, the sanitary authority were required within three months to take steps for carrying an improvement scheme into execution. In the event of their default the Local Government Board might order their inspector to exercise all the powers and to perform all the duties of the sanitary authority under the Acts.

202. Further amending Acts were passed in 1892, 1896, 1903, and by the Act 6 Ed. VII c. 37 of 1906 a great alteration was made in the terms upon which loans could be made to rural district councils for the purposes of the Acts. It empowered the Land Commission to make advances to an amount not exceeding four and a quarter millions on the same terms and conditions as for land purchase, *viz.*: that advances should be repayable in 68½ years at 2½ per cent. interest or £3 5s. 6d. per cent. covering principal and interest. Moreover, by placing at the disposal of the Local Government Board certain sums from Irish funds, it provided for the payment of 36 per cent. of the annuities of £3 5s. 0d. per cent.—in other words that the local authority should pay only 64 per cent. or £2 1s. 7d., and the Local Government Board £1 3s. 5d. The procedure was altered by empowering the inspector of

the Board, instead of the Board itself, to make the order in confirmation of a scheme which he had enquired into, and substituting for the appeal to the Privy Council an appeal to the Local Government Board or to the County Court. Provision was also made for the simplification of the proof of title, with the view of diminishing legal expenses. The rating limit of 1s. in the £. fixed by the original Act of 1883 could be extended to 1s. 3d. when the Local Government Board were satisfied that additional labourers' cottages were required and could not be built without such extension.

203. Under the original Act of 1883 the term agricultural labourer was defined to mean "a person who habitually works for hire in agricultural work upon the land of some other person, and whose principal means of living is such hire, and includes a herdsman. The term does not include any person who is not paid for his labour by wages." This was repealed by the Act of 1885, which provided that the expression agricultural labourer should mean "a man or woman whose occupation during the ordinary season of agricultural work is the doing of agricultural work for hire on the land of some other person or persons, and includes a herdsman. The term does not include any person who is not wholly or partially paid for his or her labour by wages." This definition was again repealed by the Act of 1886, which defined an agricultural labourer to mean "a man or woman who does agricultural work for hire at any season of the year, on the land of some other person or persons, and includes hand-loom weavers and fishermen doing agricultural work as aforesaid, and also herdsmen." This definition was very considerably extended by the Act of 1903, which provided that the expression agricultural labourer "shall include any person (other than a domestic or menial servant), working for hire in a rural district, whose average wages in the year preceding the lodgment of any representation under the Labourers (I) Acts 1883 to 1896, affecting him do not exceed two shillings and sixpence a day, and who is not in occupation of land exceeding one quarter of an acre." This brings within the definition an entirely new class—in fact, all rural workers subject to the limitation specified as to wages and occupation of land.

Up to March 31st, 1907, there had been 26,210 cottages authorized, of which 21,948 had been provided, the total amount of loans sanctioned being £3,784,810. The first of the new schemes made under the 1906 Act was submitted to the Local Government Board in May, 1907, and there had been received up to December 31st, 1907, no less than 139 schemes from 135 rural districts, proposing to provide 22,377 cottages, 2,611 additional half acres for cottages already erected, and 804 other allotments, the estimated cost thereof reaching the very large sum of £4,206,343.

204. The rents charged for the cottages already provided are in many cases less than what would be charged by private individuals for cottages of a similar or even inferior description. Under Sec. 29 of the Act of 1906, however, rural district councils are now required to make regulations containing *inter alia* a schedule of rents to be reserved in lettings and laying down that those rents shall be so fixed as to secure a reasonable return, having regard to the circumstances of the locality affected, on the expenditure of the council. Such regulations require the confirmation of the Local Government Board, as in the case of bye-laws under the Public Health Act.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CLASSES RELIEVED.

(a) THE ABLE-BODIED, INCLUDING CASUALS (I.E., THE INS AND OUTS) AND VAGRANTS.

205. The Irish Royal Commission of 1833-6 stated that the evidence before them proved the existence of deep distress in all parts of Ireland. They pointed out that there was not in that country the division of labour which existed in Great Britain, and that the labouring class looked to agriculture alone for support, hence the supply of agricultural labour greatly exceeded the demand, and small earnings and widespread misery were the consequence. The Commission mentioned that the proportion of agricultural labourers to the acre in Ireland and in England was as five to two. Agricultural wages varied from 6d. to 1s. a day, the average of the country being about 8½d., and the earnings of the labourers amounted on an average of the whole class to from 2s. to 2s. 6d. a week, or thereabouts, for the year round. The Commission added that in consequence it was impossible for the able-bodied in general to provide against sickness or the temporary absence of employment, or against old age, or the destitution of their widows and children in the event of their own premature decease. "With those facts before us we cannot hesitate to state that we consider remedial measures requisite to ameliorate the condition of the Irish poor. What these measures should be is a question, complicated and involving considerations of the deepest importance to the whole body of the people, both in Ireland and Great Britain." The Commission then made a series of recommendations all more or less connected with agriculture, which was considered to be the only pursuit for which the body of the people of Ireland were qualified by habit.

205. Mr. Nicholls, in his Reports, did not propose to differentiate between the destitute able-bodied, and the destitute of any other class. All classes, the able-bodied as well as the infirm, the young as well as the old, male and female, if destitute, were to be relieved in one manner, and in one manner only, viz., in the workhouse.

The Act of 1838 consequently contains no specific mention of the able-bodied. The old, the infirm, the defective, and the children were to be first relieved, and then "such other persons" as the Guardians might deem to be destitute.

206. In their Minute of October 9th, 1838, the English Poor Law Commissioners state: "Employment for the able-bodied should be provided within the workhouse, to which they should be strictly confined, so long as they remain dependent on the union for support. For every class of inmates indeed, employment should be provided, but for the able-bodied it should be of such a nature as to be irksome and to awaken or increase a dislike to remain in the workhouse, for which purpose corn mills will probably be found as in England to be the most effective." The dietary "must on no account be superior or even equal to the ordinary mode of subsistence of the labouring classes of the neighbourhood." It was considered that two meals a day were sufficient for adults, but that three meals were advisable in the case of children. The Commissioners in 1841 considered that the dietary in the two Dublin workhouses was "too abundant," but they did not withhold their sanction thereto being desirous of "acting concurrently with the Boards of Guardians where the divergence from correct principles as indicated by experience is not too great." The dietary for the adults in these workhouses was then as follows:—

Breakfast (every day): 7 ozs. oatmeal in stirabout.

Dinner on five days: 4 lbs. potatoes (weighed raw), with ½ pint buttermilk.

Dinner on two days: 2 lbs. (weighed raw) potato stew with broth.

207. The Irish Poor Law Commissioners, however, appeared to take a more liberal view as they addressed a letter to these Guardians on January 26th, 1859, suggesting improvements in this dietary "with a view of affording a somewhat greater total amount of nutriment in the course of the week." It was suggested amongst other things, that meat soup should be given for dinner on three instead of two days in the week. They state in their Report for 1861 that: "Many persons described as able-bodied are so classed because they are neither sick nor aged and infirm. Nevertheless, they are inmates of the

workhouse through some physical defect. The small number of the entire class in a population of 6,500,000 evinces the existence of able-bodied pauperism in Ireland at this time in a very small degree.” Decrease of the able-bodied.

In that year (1861) the persons classed as able-bodied males were 5·5 per cent. and the able-bodied females 16·5 per cent. of the total number of inmates of the workhouse. In 1902, they were further reduced to 5·2 and 7·1 per cent. respectively.

208. In this connection we think it advisable to mention that in Ireland as in England persons are classed as able-bodied when they are on the ordinary diet, though they may be physically disabled by loss of a limb or some constitutional feebleness from earning their own support. We have therefore recommended a change in nomenclature in order that the statistics may not convey a false impression. We think that the classification should be “Ordinarily able to work,” and “Not ordinarily able to work.” Many classed as able-bodied are not ordinarily able to work.

209. The Vice-Regal Commission report that the able-bodied inmates of workhouses are comparatively few. In the Census which they caused to be taken on March 11th, 1905, they found that 2,974 persons, of whom 1,512 were males and 1,462 were females, belonged to this class. Out of this number, 796 males and 873 females were found in the cities of Belfast, Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Limerick. Those therefore remaining in 154 workhouses amounted to a total of 1,305 of which 716 were males and 589 were females, and the Commissioners report that this class, though called able-bodied, are not ordinarily able to work; for classification depends on the diet lists. The report continues:—

Exclusive of the ins-and-outs, this class of all other able-bodied includes in Provincial, as distinguished from City or Urban, workhouses, labourers or servants who have lost their situations for some fault, or through ill-health, and who cannot get re-employed in the same kind of situation they had before; those who have failed in business or in some independent employment owing to drink, dishonesty, or inefficiency; and men who are cripples or have rupture or some other physical defect—all of whom are healthy in the sense that they are able to be about and to be put on the healthy diet. A good many of them might, however, be classed as infirm. Any young or middle-aged soldiers or ex-soldiers and militia men in the workhouse are also placed in this class. The women of this class are frequently wives of men just referred to, and have therefore been obliged to enter a workhouse. There are also widows of good character with only one child; and widows and married and single women of indifferent character or intemperate habits are included in this class. Mothers of illegitimate children pass into this class from the single woman's nursery, or from the nursery that is common to both single and married mothers in some workhouses. Women and girls over fifteen years of age and up to the termination of middle age, no matter whether their character and behaviour are good, indifferent or bad, are in this class, and they live together in the same wards of the workhouse, except when they have children with them under two years of age.

210. Under the statute of 2 Anne, c. 19, 1703, all “vagabonds and beggars” found in the city or liberties of Dublin were consigned to the care of the governors of the workhouse established in Dublin pursuant to that statute. The accommodation fitted up for their reception consisted of “the vaults and other convenient places” under the hall of the workhouse. These vaults or cellars are specified as having been 240 feet long by 17 feet wide with an “airy” sunk at the outside of the building for the purpose of affording light and to carry off the rain water, and they were to have a double row of beds “two tire” high to admit of sleeping 100 men and 60 women, and also to be used for their working and day accommodation. Disabled poor were not to be admitted under any pretext whatsoever.¹ Vagrants.

The law required vagrants and sturdy beggars “to be employed,” and to work “voluntarily,” but when there was no work or employment to be had for them they were apparently liable to be flogged, imprisoned, receive “severe usage,” and be treated with “proportionate rigour,” and finally were to be transported beyond the seas “without trial or traverse.”¹

Until the year 1731, when they died their bodies were buried without coffins, but after that time it was ordered that they should have coffins allowed them.¹

¹ Wodsworth's History of the Dublin Foundling Hospital.

Their diet was, perhaps, the most merciful thing in their treatment. It consisted of fair quantities of gruel, bread, milk porridge and "burgoo"¹ with some milk and one pound of meat a day extra to those who could do a hard day's work and earn 8d.

211. The Select Committee of the House of Commons of 1830, refer to the enactments under which idle vagrants, or "pretended Irish gentlemen" who will not work, may on the presentment of a Grand Jury be apprehended and transported for seven years. They then observe that "although it is necessary to continue penalties against vagrancy they cannot but think that a more constitutional and efficient system may be adopted than one which allows the penalty of transportation to be inflicted on the mere presentment of a Grand Jury, and this not for an offence defined with precision, but under contingencies extremely vague and uncertain."

212. The Irish Royal Commission of 1833-6 recommended that the laws with respect to vagrancy should be altered:—"Our recommendation is that penitentiaries shall be established to which vagrants when taken up shall be sent; that they be charged with the vagrancy before the next quarter sessions, and if convicted shall be removed as free labourers to such colony, not penal, as shall be appointed for them by the Colonial Department." The wages earned in the Colony are to be attached until the expenses of their passage be defrayed, and it is added that by such provisions "all poor persons who cannot find means of support at home, and who are willing to live by their labour abroad, will be furnished with the means of doing so, and with intermediate support, if fit to emigrate, and if not, will be otherwise provided for, while the idle who would rather beg than labour will be taken up and the evils of vagrancy suppressed."

213. Mr. Nicholls observes in his Report that "the present state of the law of Ireland as regards beggars and vagrants, and the habits and feelings of the Irish people throw considerable difficulty in the way of an immediate suppression of mendicancy." His original draft of the Poor Relief (Ireland) Bill contained clauses for the suppression of vagrancy in Unions as the workhouses were successively completed and in operation, but there appears to have been a strong feeling in the House that nothing should be done to prevent begging until the Poor Law was everywhere fully established. The clauses were subsequently dropped.

214. It appears from the Annual Report for 1841, that the opening of the two Dublin workhouses resulted in a marked reduction in the number of beggars in the streets. The diminution was, however, only temporary, as the vacuum was soon filled by a fresh influx from the surrounding districts, and the streets and suburbs were again fully stocked with beggars. The Commissioners, therefore, considered that the repression of mendicancy was necessary in every union as soon as the workhouse was open.

215. The Act 10 & 11 Vic., c. 84, 1847, contains provisions for the punishment of persons wandering abroad and begging, or going from union to union for the purpose of obtaining relief. Sec 15 of the Prevention of Crimes Act 1871 (34 and 35 Vic. c. 112) amends and extends to Ireland (Sec. 4 of the Vagrancy Act, 1824) under which Justices of the Peace are enabled to commit to prison for a period not exceeding three months with hard labour any person convicted of the offences set forth in that Section.

216. Such is a brief summary of the legislative enactments which have been placed on the statute book as regards the able-bodied and vagrant class in Ireland. In the enlarged areas which we have recommended, or in groups of them, it may be found necessary to establish industrial or agricultural institutions such as we have suggested for England,² and indeed the Vice-Regal Commission are clearly of opinion that such institutions will be necessary, and the proposals which we now make are the development of ideas contained in their report.

¹ This burgoo (*burgout*, Fr., *brose*, Sc.) consisted of some oatmeal stirred up in cold water seasoned with salt and pepper.

² Vide Part VI., paragraphs 631-635 of English Report.

217. Earlier in this report we have expressed our opinion that these institutions should be both curative and restorative in treatment. The discipline should be strict. The open air life will conduce to the rehabilitation of those subject to its influence; there should be attached to each institution sufficient land to employ a number of persons, and provision should also be made for those who, by reason of physical infirmity, are not fitted for agricultural labour. The workshops and land need not necessarily be adjacent to the housing accommodation, but they should be either in the country or on the outskirts of the town, and the institutions should be so organised as to provide several distinct classes of treatment in distinct divisions. Well conducted men might if they show industry, be awarded small gratuities in the shape of good conduct pay, the greater part of such pay to be allowed to accumulate and be given to the men on leaving. We are thus recommending the introduction into Ireland of modified Labour Colonies which have proved to some extent successful in England and on the Continent. Some such system should be inaugurated if adequate provision is to be made for the able-bodied, casuals and tramps.

Treatment should be curative and restorative.

218. As regards detention, it may be found necessary to establish for the whole of Ireland, one or more compulsory detention colonies—institutions which are essentially necessary to the success of these Voluntary Industrial and Agricultural Institutions which we have just alluded to. They should be under the supervision of the General Prisons Board, and to them might be committed, for any period between six months and three years, persons guilty of a wilful and persistent repetition of any of the following offences:—

Detention colonies.

(a) Wilful refusal or neglect of persons to maintain themselves or their families, although such persons are wholly or in part able to do so; the result of such refusal or neglect being that such persons or their families have become chargeable to the Public Assistance Authority.

(b) Wilful refusal on the part of a person receiving assistance to perform the work or to observe the regulations duly prescribed in regard to such assistance.

(c) Wilful refusal to comply with the conditions laid down by the Public Assistance Authority on which assistance can be obtained, with the result that a person's family thereby become chargeable.

(d) Giving way to gambling, drink, or idleness, with the result that a person or his family thereby become chargeable.

The Public Assistance Authority should pay the full cost of maintenance of persons sent to detention colonies by them; those committed by the magistrate on the initiative of the Police should be charged to the General Prison Board.

It may be found necessary to organise similar colonies for women.

219. Relatives who are liable should be required to contribute to the cost of public assistance, and the procedure should be simplified. The cost of the assistance should be recoverable from relatives after a person has ceased to be chargeable. Non-labile relatives should also be induced to contribute where they are able to do so.

Relatives should be required to contribute.

220. Single lapse cases should be dealt with in special institutions as recommended by the Vice-Regal Commission, but if these are not available the Public Assistance Authority should institute homes of their own; charitable workers to watch over the girls on their return to the world.

Unmarried Mothers.

For depraved immoral women, detention and reformatory treatment on lines similar to those adopted for "in-and-out" cases should be organised.

Feeble-minded unmarried mothers should be dealt with in accordance with the proposals of the Royal Commission on the Feeble-minded. Meantime the Public Assistance Authority should have power to detain such mothers.

(b) THE SICK.

(i) *Historical Sketch.*

221. The system of medical relief in Ireland, inaugurated in 1851, was engrafted upon a previously existing system which had been supported partly by private subscription and partly by contributions from the Grand Juries. The

dispensaries appear to have been supported prior to 1890 by the landlords, gentry and well-to-do classes with the object of providing medical attendance for their tenants and retainers. The medical officer of the dispensary was either in practice in the particular district or else when he accepted the post he removed there, attracted by the hope of working up a remunerative private practice inasmuch as his full time was not given to or required for the dispensary patients. In 1805 it was enacted (Act 45 Geo. III., c. 111, Secs. 3 and 4) that the Grand Juries might contribute to the funds at each of the dispensaries, the sums equal to the amount of actual subscriptions and donations. Every subscriber of one guinea and upwards became a member of the governing body of the dispensary for one year from the date of his subscription. In the preamble of the Act it was stated that the distance of many parts of the county from the county infirmary did not allow the poor of the outlying districts the advantages of immediate medical aid and advice which the infirmary was supposed to afford. It would thus seem that the earlier dispensaries were regarded as auxiliaries or branch departments of the county infirmaries and subsidised on that ground.

222. By the Act of 1836 (6 and 7 Will. IV., c. 116, Sec. 81) it was made imperative on the Grand Jury to contribute their moiety of the cost of the dispensary. A portion of the fines imposed at Petty Sessions was also applied in aid of the funds of the local dispensary.

Number of In-
stitutions for
Medical Relief
in 1838.

223. At the time of the introduction of the Poor Law system into Ireland there were 31 County infirmaries, 5 city and town infirmaries, 452 dispensaries, in addition to 42 united with fever hospitals, and 28 fever hospitals which had no dispensaries attached thereto. By Sec. 47 of the Act of 1838, the Poor Law Commissioners were empowered with the concurrence of the governors of such hospitals or infirmaries to examine into the administration thereof, and to give directions for their better and more effective management. The Commissioners were also (Sec. 48) to make strict inquiry, with as little delay as possible, into the several existing fever hospitals and dispensaries, etc., and to report specially on the subject. This they did in 1840, and this Report was followed eleven years later by the Act 14 & 15 Vic. c. 68: "An Act for the better distribution, support, and management of medical charities in Ireland." This enactment provided for the division of the Unions into dispensary districts, the appointment of medical officers, etc., for the service thereof, and for the issue of medical relief tickets to "poor persons" resident therein, entitling them to gratuitous medical advice, treatment and medicine.

"Poor Persons"
eligible for
Medical Relief.

224. It will be observed that the Legislature in the Act of 1851 made an important distinction between "a poor person" in need of medical relief, and a "destitute poor person" requiring relief in some other form. This distinction had already been given effect to in Sec. 16 of the Act 6 & 7 Vic. c. 92, 1843, which empowered Guardians to provide for the relief of "poor persons" affected with fever or other dangerous disease in a house or houses rented or hired for the reception of such cases, or by appropriating for that purpose such portion or portions of the Union workhouse as the Guardians with the consent of the Central Authority should consider it safe and convenient to be so applied, and to charge the expenses so incurred on the rates of the Union.

Success of the
Dispensary
System.

225. The Report of the Poor Law Union and Lunacy Inquiry Commission (Ireland), 1879, deals at considerable length with the general system of medical relief now administered in Ireland. The system is not, the Commissioners observe, "strictly speaking, Poor Law (medical) relief of destitution, but the administration of medical charity." They state that the dispensary system appears to be well adapted to the condition of society in Ireland.

The final paragraph of the Commissioners' observations on the subject is as follows:—

"Defects more or less serious in the organisation of medical relief in Ireland are complained of in various communications which have been addressed to us. Though not called upon to consider how far these complaints may be well founded, or to discuss suggestions which are offered for remedying alleged abuses or defects, it would be unjust to conclude these observations without recording our opinion that the medical charity of Ireland, is, with all its defects of administration, in advance of any similar system yet organised in any country in Europe."

226. The 159 unions in Ireland are now divided into 740 dispensary districts, containing 1,208 dispensaries or dispensary stations. The number of officers for the service of these dispensary districts in 1907 was :—

| | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| | Number of Dispensary Districts. |
|--|---------------------------------------|

[illegible]

These officers are not "whole-time officers," but engage in private practice, of which in most of the rural areas their official position secures them a monopoly. The salary paid by the Guardians is regarded as a retaining fee, which, however, gives the poor the first claim on the services of the medical officer.

The number of new cases attended and registered during the year ended 31st March, 1907, was 654,877, of which 169,376 were attended at their own homes. The total cost of the outdoor medical service in that year, including salaries of midwives and compounding of medicine, rent of dispensary houses, &c., was £192,142.

The salaries of the dispensary medical officers amounted to £96,529, the payment of Salaries of substitutes £15,230, and the cost of medicines and appliances £18,109—total £129,868. Dispensary Medical Officers. In the previous year the amounts were: officers £93,462, substitutes £13,359, medicines £17,625—total £124,446.

227. In 1867 the Treasury made a grant out of which one-half the salary of each medical officer of a workhouse or dispensary district, and one half of the cost of medicines and appliances was recouped to the guardians, and this grant was continued annually down to the passing of the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898, when it became payable out of the Local Taxation (Ireland) Account. The Local Government Board then prescribed certain conditions to be observed in the taking of the contracts and in the analysis of samples from each supply of drugs. The result has been that a supply of drugs in accordance with the standards of the Pharmacopœia has been secured for the poor at a much less cost than formerly.

(ii.) *The Medical Service.*

228. In the large towns of Great Britain, as well as in the populous centres of mining and industry there are established, Medical Clubs, Provident Dispensaries, Trade and Benefit Societies, by subscribing to which the working classes secure a right to medical attendance and medicine in times of illness. Such organisations scarcely exist in Ireland, and we understand that among a scattered agricultural population it would be difficult, if not impossible, to establish and work them. Hence we do not recommend for Ireland an organisation of medical and hospital relief identical with that which we have proposed for England and Wales. But we do propose that the Public Assistance Authority in Ireland as well as in England should have the powers and duties of managing, controlling and co-ordinating all the rate-supported institutions for the sick within their area ; and of increasing or diminishing their number according to need ; and of organising and providing outdoor medical relief and nursing throughout the country.

229. Both the Report of the Vice-Regal Commission and the Memorandum of the State Medical Medical Commissioner advocate the conversion of the present County infirmary, work- Service. house and dispensary medical service into a State medical service.

The Vice-Regal Commissioners contemplate that the entire salaries should be paid from State funds, and that the appointment and control of the officers should be vested in one of the Government departments. The Medical Commissioner, however, considers that even though part of the cost of the Medical Charities Act continued to be charged upon local rates, the service might nevertheless be a National one, and the appointment, salaries, and discipline of the medical officers taken out of the hands of the Local Authorities.

230. We gather, however, that this recommendation of the Vice-Regal Commission was received with little favour by the Irish Local Authorities, who, no doubt, desire to retain in their hands the appointment of their medical officers; and it seems obvious that, so long as the local rates bear the greater part of the cost of the medical service, as at present, it would be difficult to carry through Parliament a proposal depriving Local Authorities of any voice in the selection of their medical men.

231. The Vice-Regal Commission's alternative of a service wholly charged on State funds therefore seems to us to be the only practicable solution of this problem, if the service is to be free from local control; but it is clear that a very strong case would have to be made out to prove the necessity for throwing this portion of the Poor Law service in Ireland wholly upon the Exchequer.

State Medical
Service for
England.

232. On the question of a State medical service in England and Wales, the British Medical Association,¹ which includes 20,000 medical practitioners, laid before us the official views of the Association as follows:—

“The Association has had under its consideration three systems of appointment of Poor Law medical officers, namely:—

(a) The creation of a State Medical Service consisting of whole-time officers to whom perhaps other duties in addition to that of Poor Law medical officer would be assigned.

(b) The appointment of special officers devoting as a rule only a part of their time to Poor Law work (the present system).

(c) Appointment of no special officers, provision being made whereby any patient receiving medical relief under the Poor Law may be attended by any local medical practitioner, who has previously intimated to the Guardians his willingness to undertake such work in accordance with the regulations of the service for the time being.

“In the opinion of the Association there is no general dissatisfaction in the Medical Profession with the present system of appointment, but there are some members of the profession who have paid special attention to the subject who would prefer the system (a) and others who would prefer the system (c).”²

233. As regards Ireland, however, the Irish Committee of the Association took a more definite view, and in a letter addressed to us on the 13th August, 1907, relative to the report of the Vice-Regal Commission, they state:—

“The Irish Committee of the British Medical Association having considered very fully the report desire to express their conviction that it is most desirable that the Royal Commission on the Poor Law should accept and approve this report as a satisfactory solution of the problem so far as the report goes.”

234. It seems to us that the proposal to convert the Irish Poor Law Medical Service into a State Medical Service has been made mainly in order to remedy certain defects in the existing service: within the limits of a Poor Law Union there is little room for promotion; in the election of the medical officer local influences are likely to outweigh medical qualifications; in dealing with cases and in his general behaviour local support or local opposition exercises not infrequently a deteriorating influence on the action and character of the medical officer. These defects will be minimised, if not completely corrected, by the county system we propose.

Other defects complained of, which are rather personal to the officers themselves, are, we think, to a large extent matters of education and character. The remedy, in our opinion, is to be found not alone in a change of the medical system, but in raising the standard of general education of the candidates who enter on medical studies, and in improving the tone and spirit of the medical schools.

235. We do not therefore agree with the recommendation of the Vice-Regal Commission that “a State Medical Service should be established, and the cost thereof defrayed out of money voted by Parliament.”

Grievances of
Irish Dispensary
Medical Officers.

236. The Medical Commissioner's Memorandum discusses at length the grievances of the medical officers in regard to salaries, and attributes many of the defects of the system and the shortcomings of the officers to the insufficiency of their salaries. We do not know if the assumption is correct that there is a supply of highly qualified men who now

¹ British Medical Association 39013 (1), 39018.

² 39013 (19) (20).

remain outside the dispensary service, and who would accept appointments in the sparsely populated rural areas, if the salaries were increased. No doubt, if the officers appointed were whole time officers with large salaries, some such men might be found to accept appointments. But the country could ill afford to pay such salaries, and they would not have sufficient work to engage more than a fraction of their time.

237. From the Memorandum before mentioned we find that the average salary and emoluments from public funds of the dispensary medical officer in 1905 was £180, made up as follows :—Average salary as medical officer, £116 ; for temporary services, £16 10s. ; vaccination fees, £12 10s. ; certifying lunatics, £4 ; as officer of public health, £19 ; as registrar of births, deaths, and marriages, £12. Moreover, we see by the tables that the range of variation is not as wide as in Great Britain. In the great majority of cases the salary of the Irish dispensary medical officer in that capacity varies from £100 to £130. In very few cases does the salary fall to £90 ; and the cases in which the salary falls below £90 are a negligible quantity. No doubt the decline on the population in Ireland has had the double effect of leaving the doctor with fewer “ red ticket ” cases, and at the same time fewer paying patients.

238. In England and in Scotland we have received a great mass of evidence on medical and hospital subjects from a host of witnesses, including the British Medical Association, the Scottish Branch of the British Medical Association, the Scottish Poor Law Medical Officers' Association, medical men connected with hospitals, administrators of various public and charitable institutions, medical officers of health, district medical officers and medical officers of workhouses. Those witnesses laid before us various grievances affecting the Medical Profession, but the question of salaries and fees from public funds was not generally emphasised.

239. The British Medical Association had circulated inquiries to all the Poor Law medical officers of England and Wales, over 3,500 in number, and made a careful analysis of the replies received. The information thus obtained did not indicate the existence of any general grievance as regards the inadequacy of ordinary remuneration, though in some districts the salaries were entirely inadequate. In fixing the salaries there was an absence of any uniform principle, and more regard should be had to considerations affecting the work to be done, such as the total population, the population per acre, or the size and shape of the district.¹

240. The Association considered that the principle acted on in a few Unions should be applied generally, viz : that each Poor Law medical officer should be allowed a definite holiday every year, during which the expense of employing a substitute should be defrayed by the Poor Law Authority, provision of a substitute during any other leave of absence granted beyond the annual holiday being at the expense of the medical officer himself. A fortnight was suggested at the length of the annual holiday.²

241. The Association complained that the Poor Law medical officers had to supply at their own cost drugs, serums, surgical appliances, and other materials for the use of Poor Law patients. This is the case, almost without exception, in England and Wales. The Association claimed that the salaries should be paid for medical services only, and that drugs and other materials should be provided under a separate contract, and paid for by the Guardians.³

242. The average salaries and emoluments from the public funds received by Poor Law medical officers in England and Scotland are substantially less than the average amounts similarly received by the corresponding officers in Ireland ; and the salaries paid to a not inconsiderable number of medical officers in Great Britain are only a fraction of the lowest salary paid in Ireland.⁴

243. As shown in paragraph 226 the salaries paid from public funds to the 807 permanent outdoor medical officers in Ireland amounted to £96,529 in the year ended March 31st, 1907, and the payments made to their substitutes came to £15,230. The cost

¹ British Medical Association 39013 (2) (3) (4).

² 39013 (15), 39067. ³ 39013 (7) (8) (9). ⁴ Stephens, 34902–34909. Moorhouse (Scottish Branch British Medical Association), 58013–58017. Muir (Scottish Poor Law Medical Officers Association), 58022–58026. Pearson Taylor, 66343–66346. Official Year Books—Bradford Union, Huddersfield Union, Hunslet Union, &c.

of medicines amounted to £18,109 for the outdoor service. Therefore the ratepayers and taxpayers of Ireland contributed in that year £129,868 for salaries and medicines of the Dispensary Medical Service.

Cost of English
Medical Services.

In England during the year ended 25th March, 1907, according to the Report of the English Local Government Board, the total cost of the outdoor medical service, including salaries of doctors and nurses, extra medical fees, and as far as they were paid out of public funds, medical and surgical appliances, drugs, etc., supplied to the sick, amounted to £251,108.

England has eight times the population, and much more than eight times the wealth of Ireland, and yet the public burden of the outdoor medical service in England is] less than twice the similar burden in Ireland.

244. According to the Provisions of the Scottish Poor Law no able-bodied person is eligible for relief. Hence every applicant for either indoor or outdoor relief must be first examined by the parish doctor, and receive a certificate from him, before the relieving officer—or, as he is called in Scotland, the Inspector of the Poor—can deal with the case. This provision of the Poor Law throws on the medical officer a great mass of work over and above the attendance on the sick poor. Dr. J. V. Wallace has been for twenty-two years one of the district medical officers for Govan Combination Parish (a part of Glasgow). About 4,000 parochial patients pass through his hands on an average every year, and his salary from the Poor Law is 100*l*.¹ The population of Govan Combination Parish is 350,000. There are seven district medical officers with salaries of £100 each, and vaccination and other fees averaging yearly £15.² In the Highlands the areas for the district medical officers are immensely greater than the most extensive dispensary district in Ireland. Dr. A. C. Miller is district medical officer, at a salary of £60 a year for the parish of Kilmallie, the area of which is 306,731 acres, and the population 4,344.³ It will thus be seen that the condition of the Poor Law medical officer in Ireland contrasts not unfavourably with the condition of the medical officer in England and Scotland.

245. The Memorandum of the Medical Commissioner points out that in the year 1852 when the Irish dispensary system had been fully organised on its present lines, there were 776 dispensary medical officers with an average population of 9,012 to each officer. In 1901 there were 807 medical officers, and owing to the decline of population there was an average of only 5,525 persons to each officer. In the course of the fifty years that had elapsed in the meanwhile, typhus fever, scarlet fever, small-pox and other infectious diseases which had been fearfully prevalent were almost stamped out. No doubt tuberculosis, which is now regarded as an infectious disease, had shown an increase of the ratio of cases to the population. But the absolute number of tuberculosis cases, which is the matter that absorbs the time and labour of the medical officer, had not increased, but, on the contrary, had considerably diminished.

246. The changes which we have recommended for Ireland in the administration of Public Assistance will involve consequent changes in the existing system of medical service. The medical officers of the workhouses and of the dispensary districts are now elected by, and under the direction of, the Boards of Guardians. When those Boards are abolished, and their powers and duties transferred to the Public Assistance Authority, whose jurisdiction will extend over a whole County or County Borough—and possibly in some cases over a group of Counties—it follows that the election and control of all the medical officers of the district hospitals and of the dispensary districts of that County, or of that group of Counties, shall be vested in the one Public Assistance Authority.

247. The district hospitals and the County infirmary will be all maintained out of the one County poor rate, and, therefore, as the Vice-Regal Commission recommended, the County infirmary will be brought into the system and placed under the management of the County authority, viz., the Public Assistance Authority, of which body one or more representatives of the subscribers to the county infirmary should be appointed members having regard to the amount of subscriptions.

Under our proposal that the Public Assistance Authority shall administer all medical relief (including nursing) for the County, or County Borough, or a group of Counties,

¹ Wallace, 60312(1), 60319.

² Mitchell, 59656–59667.

³ Miller, 66117 (1) (49), 66139.

the present Union Medical Service will become a County Medical Service, and will give considerable scope for the promotion of medical officers, their transfer to more suitable spheres of work, and in case of neglect or inefficiency, for their depression or supersession.

248. The Memorandum above referred to states :—

“The Sanitary Orders authorise the appointment of medical practitioners holding diplomas in sanitary science, public health or State medicine, as Medical Superintendent Officers of Health. These officers should in future only be appointed for the Counties and Boroughs and large Urban Districts, and each should devote his whole time to the duties of his office and have entire charge of the local sanitary administration, with the dispensary medical officers acting under him as medical officers of health and sanitary sub-officers to act as inspectors of nuisances.”

249. We agree with the recommendation of appointing a whole-time Medical Superintendent of Health for the area of each Public Assistance Authority, *i.e.*, the County or County Borough, or possibly in some cases a group of Counties. We do not think that an urban district of 10,000 inhabitants could maintain a Medical Superintendent and have sufficient work to occupy his whole time. The County Superintendent of Health should be the chief executive medical officer of the Public Assistance Authority, and in order to link up and unify the whole service it would be desirable that each Authority should have only one Superintendent. Medical Superintendent Officer of Health.

250. We also concur in the recommendation made in the Memorandum that the Public Health service should form an integral part of the general medical service, so that preventive and curative remedies might be applied without an overlapping of authorities ; for that reason we recommend that the Public Assistance Authority should appoint and control the County Superintendent of Health. The same Authority would appoint and control the dispensary medical officers, who on their appointment become, under the Public Health Act, 1878, *ipso facto* the local medical officers of health.

251. The Tuberculosis (Ireland) Act passed in the last Session of Parliament empowers the County Council to appoint a Bacteriologist for its County. We recommend that the County Council should exercise that power through its Statutory Committee, the Public Assistance Authority ; and further that the Bacteriologist and Superintendent of Health should be the one person holding qualifications in Public Health and bacteriology. The two branches are cognate ; they are the sphere of specialists, and outside the range of the ordinary medical practitioner.

252. The new Public Assistance Authority would be charged with the duty of co-ordinating, and, when necessary, supplementing the medical institutions of the County or County Borough ; and of organising an outdoor medical service in all parts of their area. We are distinctly of opinion that the Public Assistance Authority should consider the populations and areas of the existing dispensary districts in the country with a view to their reorganisation and enlargement, where possible, as the present populations, in many instances, can scarcely supply sufficient work to a medical man and sufficient supplement to his salary from paying patients. The amalgamation and enlargement of the areas would afford the means, if it were thought desirable, to increase the salaries of the medical officers. Co-ordinating of Medical Institutions.

253. We understand that this is the policy which the Irish Local Government Board of late years has been urging the existing Boards of Guardians to adopt. In their Annual Report for 1902-3 they state as follows :—

“The enormous diminution in the population of this country from 6,552,055 in 1851, to 4,458,775 in 1901, and the consequent falling off in the amount of work performed by the Dispensary Medical Officers, tend to support the opinion which we have formed, that in many Unions a reduction of the Staff of Medical Officers is not only feasible, but is called for by the altered local circumstances. Moreover, the abolition of a Medical Officership enables a Board of Guardians, without adding to the charges on the Union funds, to deal liberally in regard to extra remuneration with those members of their medical staff to whom increased duties would be assigned.

“We have noticed that a large number of permanent Medical Officers are selected as temporary substitutes during the absences of their colleagues, and that this practice has become much more general during the current year—showing, apparently, that in many Unions the Medical Officers would, if remunerated, be able to undertake duties much in excess of those appertaining to their present Dispensary Districts. On the occurrence of vacancies in future in the Dispensary Medical Staff, we propose to consider in each instance, whether the then vacant post could be abolished, and, if so, whether the other Dispensary Medical Officers in the Union could be placed in the charge of extended areas, and in the possession of increased salaries, and their positions thereby substantially improved, without inflicting any real hardship on the sick poor, or imposing further burdens on the ratepayers.”

(iii.) *Workhouse Hospitals¹ and County Fever Hospitals.*

254. We now proceed to consider the provision made in Ireland for the institutional treatment of the sick. Besides the large number of voluntary hospitals in cities and towns there are 159 workhouse hospitals (with fever hospitals attached in most cases), and a number of County Infirmaries and other rate-aided or rate-supported institutions. Regarding the latter the Vice-Regal Commissioners observe:—

“Under the County system we have 34 County infirmaries, including the Meath hospital, in the City of Dublin, two hospitals in the City of Cork (the North and South infirmaries); Barrington’s hospital, Limerick; the Galway hospital, and Waterford City and County infirmary. Of these the Galway hospital might from some points of view be classed as a Poor Law institution, but the system of management is more nearly akin to that of the County infirmaries. These institutions with three or four exceptions are managed by joint Committees formed under the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898, comprised of specified numbers of members to be appointed by the County Councils and by the old Corporation of ‘Governors and Governesses.’ They are maintained partly by grants from the County Councils, partly by voluntary subscriptions, partly by the proceeds of property held by the Governors and Governesses, and partly by payments from patients.

“There is also a Cottage hospital on Valentia Island, County Kerry, which receives a County subscription; and a Town hospital at Queenstown, County Cork, which receives payments from the Cork Poor Law Union.”

255. As regards the sick in the Workhouse hospitals, the Poor Law Union and Lunacy Inquiry Commission (Ireland) 1879 observe:—

“Originally designed for the accommodation of the sick poor who might happen to be in receipt of indoor relief, they have by legislative changes, come to be hospitals for all those within each Union who claim indoor treatment under the Medical Charities Act. . . . Intended as hospitals for the sick, they are too often crowded with aged and infirm—chronic cases which can derive little, if any, benefit from medical treatment. That was one of the abuses of the old infirmary system, for the correction of which the Poor Law Commissioners looked to the operation of workhouse administration. ‘When all the workhouses,’ they wrote in 1841, ‘shall have come into operation, it is highly probable that a considerable number of the chronic cases which were previously treated in the infirmaries will be absorbed in the workhouses; and it may be presumed that the infirmaries will thus become more useful to the class of patients for which they were chiefly intended, namely, those whose ailments require intern hospital accommodation.’”

256. As regards the County fever hospitals, of which only fourteen now remain, the the Poor Law and Lunacy Inquiry Commission of 1879 observe:—

“In no branch connected with the relief of the poor in Ireland is so marked a contrast presented between the past and the present as in the accommodation provided for fever cases. In 1839, when the subject was inquired into, some counties were found to be without any fever hospital at all; several had only one, although the County Cork had as many as thirteen; Tipperary, twelve. For the whole of Ireland there were only ninety-one. In Mayo there was one fever hospital for a population of 366,328; in Clare one hospital to a population of 258,322; in Donegal one to a population of 289,149; Londonderry one to a population of 222,012. In some of these hospitals the conditions of admission were so restricted as to exclude from the benefits of the institution all patients residing at a greater distance than two miles. Nothing could be more deplorable than the condition of a fever-stricken population under such circumstances. . . . The extraordinary and progressive diminution in the number of fever cases is one of the most satisfactory results of improved medical administration. Making every reasonable allowance for the effects of a great decrease in population, improved conditions of the humbler classes and much greater attention to sanitary arrangements, the result is still such as to justify the opinion that the general establishment of fever hospitals is a main cause to which the diminution of fever and a consequent decrease of pauperism may be ascribed.”

257. The crowding of aged and infirm in the workhouse hospitals, which the Commissioners of 1879 noticed, no longer exists to the same extent. The Local Government Board’s regulations now require that the Medical Officer of the Workhouse shall give his directions in writing respecting the daily diet and treatment of each case in the hospital, and shall certify at the end of the week that every patient in the hospital has been treated according to his directions. The Medical Officer has therefore every inducement to discharge from the hospital the sick after convalescence, and not to admit the aged and infirm not requiring medical treatment.

258. But while this indiscriminate treatment of the aged and sick in hospital wards has been minimised, there are many other defects, chiefly structural, in the Irish workhouse hospitals. They are for the most part the original infirmary buildings which were constructed in 1841, and except in large urban Unions have undergone little or no

¹ Workhouse hospitals contain isolation blocks for fever cases under the administration of the Guardians and not of the Public Health Authorities.

alteration. The wards are plain, cheerless, wholly deficient in day-room accommodation, and according to present ideas in many other ways, ill-adapted to the requirements of the sick.

259. We learn that of recent years much has been done in the way of enlarging the windows, providing more comfortable beds, and improving the sanitary and lavatory arrangements; but in most of the workhouse infirmaries we visited there was still room for much improvement in these respects.

260. We have constantly borne in mind the serious burdens which are laid on Irish ratepayers, and when contrasting the building and equipment of the English and Irish workhouse hospitals, it should not be forgotten that the financial resources of the English and Irish Unions are very different, and that the Board's Inspectors and the medical officers of the workhouses often find it very difficult to persuade the Guardians to spend the money necessary to keep pace with modern ideas as to the care and treatment of the sick.

261. Dr. Downes, the Medical Member of our Commission, thus sums up his impressions of the workhouse hospitals he visited:—

“In judging their condition and efficiency one must bear in mind two things, the standard of living in the population for which they provide, and the financial resources of the Union. Where a penny rate will only produce £44, as is the case, I believe, in W., the mere repair and upkeep of a large workhouse building must be a heavy charge, and deficiencies of structural equipment must be condoned. But, speaking personally, I was impressed by the endeavour, under difficult conditions, and the fair measure of success attained in the personal care of the sick in the sick wards of the workhouses which I visited.”

262. The Vice-Regal Commission have recommended that the existing hospitals, whether Poor Law or County, should, except in a few cases, be retained in their present localities, and that additional cottage hospitals should be established at certain places in Ireland which are remote from hospital accommodation. When the sufficiency or otherwise of institutional provision for the sick is under review by the Public Assistance Authority, these recommendations should receive very careful consideration.

The appointment and control of surgeons and physicians in the County infirmary, fever hospitals, district and cottage hospitals, and of the dispensary medical officers, by the Public Assistance Authority, will unify the medical service of the County. The appointment by the same Authority of a County Medical Superintendent of Health, who will supervise the district medical officers of health, will lead to close co-operation between the medical and Public Health Services.

The enlargement of the area, and the equalisation of the cost over that area should result in better classification, improved administration, and greater economy. Finally, wherever practicable, the principle should be established and enforced of payment of maintenance on the part of those who are able to defray the whole or a portion of the cost.

263. We are in favour of compulsory removal to hospitals for the same classes of cases and under the same safeguards as we have recommended in the case of England and Wales and in the interests of economy and efficiency it would seem to be desirable to set up a County ambulance system, so that those needing the benefit of the highest medical and surgical skill which the country can provide, may, with the least delay and danger be conveyed to a proper institution, and the multiplication of expensive establishments in a sparsely populated country be avoided.

(iv.) *Nursing.*

264. The most important reform in workhouse hospital administration in recent years has been in regard to nursing:—

Art. II. (1) of the workhouse Rules of February 5th, 1849, permitted the employment of any female inmate of the workhouse of proper age as assistant to the nurses in any of the sick wards. No particular qualifications for nurses were then prescribed. In 1890 the Local Government Board issued a Circular to Boards of Guardians calling attention to the employment of unqualified and inexperienced persons in that capacity, and urging the importance of appointing trained and experienced persons as nurses at adequate salaries.

265. An Order under seal issued by the Local Government Board in 1897 required that no pauper inmate should be employed as attendant in the sick or lying-in wards, or upon any pauper who required nursing unless such inmate shall be approved by the medical officer for the purpose and shall act under the immediate supervision of a paid officer.

"The Nurse of the Workhouse" was, by this Order, made responsible for the superintendence and control of the nurses, assistant nurses and attendants, subject in all matters relating to the treatment of the sick to the directions of the medical officer, and in all other matters to the direction of the master or matron. In any emergency, the medical officer could requisition the master to provide a temporary nurse until the next meeting of the Guardians. In July, 1901, the Board issued a revised Nursing Order. It prohibited the employment of any pauper inmate in the performance of nursing duties. It further prohibited any inmate from acting as attendant except under the supervision of a paid officer. The same Order required that the nurses appointed in future should have obtained, after a course of training and examination, a certificate of proficiency in nursing from some hospital, etc., recognised by the Board as an efficient school for medical and surgical nursing. A further important change made by that Order was that the nursing staff were to be under the sole control of the medical officer, except for general disciplinary control, when they would be subject to the master, and in his absence, to the matron. This change was made because, on the introduction of trained or qualified nurses, it became undesirable that even a nominal control over the sick wards should be in the hands of persons without training or qualification in the management of an infirmary or hospital.

266. By the system we have proposed the Public Assistance Authority would have the control of the county hospital and all the district hospitals in the county. This system would obviously facilitate the recommendations of the Vice-Regal Commission with regard to the training of a staff of county nurses in the county hospital, and of sending them as occasion required to the various district hospitals. We notice with satisfaction that the Poor Law Authorities in Ireland have appointed 640 outdoor district midwives, so that a large proportion of the dispensary districts have been provided with this very necessary class of officer.

267. In a very large number of the infirmaries which we visited we found that the nursing arrangements were in charge of religious orders, and with scarcely an exception we have to record that their devotion to their work, care of the patients, and the whole tone of the wards left a most favourable impression on the mind, and this in spite of the inability on financial grounds and in some cases the reluctance of the Guardians to carry out structural alterations which were obviously necessary. In some cases (*e.g.*, the inadequate supply of hot water) the nuns were required to perform manual labour which they certainly ought to be saved. There are, however, two suggestions which we venture to make:—

(a) Certain religious orders seem to experience considerable difficulty in getting the necessary nursing training. We understand that during recent years many nuns have been trained in the Union hospitals of Cork, Limerick and Waterford, and in some other hospitals. Others we believe are trained in Liverpool. Some of our number visited the hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth in London, where both religious and lay nurses are trained. The usual lectures and demonstrations are given by the staff and certificates are granted on the report of an independent examiner. Those certificates, however, are not complete, as the hospital has no accident ward and no out-patients department. Arrangements have been made with the Governors of a Metropolitan hospital under which lay nurses after two years training enter that institution as second year probationers, and after a further two years training, if they pass the necessary examinations, obtain a full nursing certificate. But this further period of training is impracticable for those ladies who have already entered religion. We venture to suggest that the Ecclesiastical Authorities might well consider whether arrangements could not be made so that postulants should get the complete course of training before they have received the religious habit.

(b) Secondly we wish to call attention to an important departure which has been made in the habit worn by those ladies nursing in this hospital. With the full sanction and approval of the highest Ecclesiastical Authorities, they have

been allowed to adopt, in lieu of the usual black dress of the order, a suitable washing habit of white drill, with a plain white coif. From a surgical point of view this change is most welcome. We venture to call attention to this point in order that the proper authorities may consider whether advantage might be taken of this change in some of the Irish Infirmaries.

268. In the course of our visits we were enabled to form some estimate of the invaluable services which are being rendered to the poor in certain remote districts by the "Jubilee Nurses" introduced into Ireland by Lady Dudley during the Vice-royalty of her husband. The extension of this most useful provision is hampered by lack of funds. But the generosity of the Irish people, both at home and abroad, is notorious, and if the scheme which we have recommended for the establishment of Public Assistance Authorities and, wherever practicable, of Voluntary Aid Councils, be carried into effect, we anticipate that this serious hindrance will be lessened by voluntary contributions from private sources within and without Ireland. If these contributions are not forthcoming it will be necessary for the Public Assistance Authorities to appoint and maintain nurses on the same lines as the Guardians appoint and maintain midwives. But as the Vice-Regal Commission suggests the same person might be trained and act as nurse and midwife; and moreover, in some cases, by an arrangement with Lady Dudley's Nursing Committee, she might be maintained, on condition that she had the high qualification of a Jubilee Nurse, partly by the Committee and partly by the Public Assistance Authority.

(v.) *Tuberculosis.*

269. In Chapter 3, par. 195 of Part V. of our English Report, we dealt with the subject of the connection between sickness and pauperism. We there pointed out that after a careful examination of 4,000 cases of consumption in the wards of a Union Infirmary, Dr. Nathan Raw, Liverpool, came to the conclusion that nearly 60 per cent. were paupers, because they were consumptives, and not consumptives because they were paupers.

270. Her Excellency the Countess of Aberdeen in the evidence which she gave before us furnished us with some very interesting details of the steps taken by the Women's National Health Association to combat the dreadful scourge of Tuberculosis. This disease has decreased in England and Scotland. In Ireland, though the ratio of cases to the population has increased, there has been a substantial decrease in the absolute number of cases, but that decrease has not been so rapid as the decrease of population. For this state of facts several reasons are assigned.

271. The Medical Commissioner of the Local Government Board for Ireland, in his Notes on Public Health, which we print in the Appendix, points out that it is the town districts which suffer most severely from Tuberculosis. He states:—

'Agricultural depression and lack of employment have led to the migration of an increasing proportion of the rural population into the towns. The migrants from their training and habits are unsuited to the conditions of town life and the towns are ill-fitted to receive them. The housing accommodation for the working classes in Irish towns is very inferior, and comparatively little has been done for the improvement of the dwellings of the urban labourers. The number of houses erected, or to be erected in Ireland under the Housing of the Working Classes Acts to the 31st March, 1906, amounts to 4565. In rural districts, on the other hand, 22,000 cottages have been provided under the Labourers' Acts, and 23,000 further cottages are in contemplation. The solution of the housing problem in Irish Urban districts offers great scope for effecting a reduction of tuberculosis mortality, but it must be accompanied, if not preceded by, a more direct campaign against the tubercle bacillus

'The success achieved in dealing with Typhus Fever in Ireland, in spite of poverty, dirt and malnutrition, should encourage us now to deal with Tuberculosis so far as the special circumstances of the disease will permit in a somewhat similar manner.'

272. It is strange that, although it is generally admitted that consumption, especially in its advanced stages, is an infectious disease, little provision has been made in Ireland for the isolation and treatment of those suffering from it. This is all the more remarkable in view of the ample provision which has been made for other infectious diseases, although there are more deaths from consumption than from all other forms of infectious diseases put together.

We should mention, however, that there are two fully equipped public sanatoria in Ireland, both of which we visited and which have been doing good work for several years, viz: the National Sanatorium at Newcastle, Co. Wicklow, and the Foster Green Sanatorium at Newtonbreda, near Belfast.

We may add that the Belfast Guardians have acquired premises at Whiteabbey, some distance from the city, and have there made excellent arrangements for the treatment of cases in the various stages of the disease.

Further provision for the prevention and treatment of consumption has been made by the Tuberculosis Act of last Session, which comes into operation on the 1st July, 1909.

A large number of the witnesses examined before the Vice-Regal Commission gave very strong reasons for making improvements in the methods of dealing with the treatment and isolation of patients suffering from phthisis. In the majority of the Irish workhouse infirmaries it is true that there are separate wards for consumptive patients, but with very few exceptions these are only partially isolated, the patients using the same passages, staircases and exercise yards, while in some infirmaries this partial isolation has not yet been provided.

273. The Vice-Regal Commissioners state that some of the disused workhouses could with a reasonable outlay be converted into fairly efficient sanatoria. The portion to be set apart for cases in the earlier stages of the disease could be adapted as far as possible on the lines of a sanatorium, with large windows, with open air shelters, and other requisites. The other portion of the buildings would not require extensive alterations and at a small cost could be made to afford suitable accommodation for more advanced cases. In this recommendation we concur.

(c) CHILDREN.

274. There is no class of the destitute in the treatment of which the policy has changed so remarkably from time to time as in the case of children. The Act of 2 Anne c., 19, 1703, contained provision for dealing with vagrants and foundling children in the workhouse established in Dublin under that Act. This double function being deemed inconsistent, the Act 11 & 12 Geo. III., c. 11, was passed to remedy the defect, and the foundling children were separated from the vagrant class. A foundling hospital was also established in Cork, and a small one in Galway. The Dublin Foundling hospital gradually became one of the most gigantic baby-farming, nursing, boarding-out and apprenticing institutions that these countries have ever seen. The objects of the institution were avowedly two-fold: firstly, to prevent the "exposure, death, and actual murder of illegitimate children" and, secondly, to educate and rear children taken charge of by the institution "in the Reformed or Protestant Faith, and thereby to strengthen and promote the Protestant interest in Ireland." Both these objects were, however, more or less frustrated by the operation of natural causes.

275. The mismanagement of the Foundling hospital became so notorious, that a Committee of the House of Commons inquired into the matter on oath in 1797. It appears from their Report that out of 12,768 children admitted in the six years ended June 24th, 1796, 9,786 had died, and 2,847 were unaccounted for! The management was "reformed" under a new Act of Parliament in 1798.

276. Under Sec. 34 of the Irish Poor Relief Act, 1838, the Poor Law Commissioners were to take measures for the gradual reduction in the number of inmates of foundling hospitals. Under Sec. 41 of the same enactment the Guardians were empowered to take orders for relieving destitute children and setting them to work in the workhouse.

277. Sec. 49 of this Act provided that the Central Authority should not authorise the education of any child in a workhouse in any religious creed other than that professed by the parents or surviving parent and to which such parents or parent object, or, in the case of an orphan, to which the guardian or guardians, godfather or godmother of such orphan shall object. The clergyman of the persuasion to which the child belonged was authorised to visit the workhouse for the purpose of instructing the child in the principles of his religion.

278. In May, 1839, about the time of the virtual extinction of the Dublin Foundling Hospital under Sec. 34 of the Irish Poor Relief Act, there were 4,258 children apprentices and invalids chargeable to this institution, the estimated grant necessary for their support in aid of the hospital property being £11,255.

Mr. W. D. Wodsworth, at one time Secretary of the Irish Local Government Board, in his history of this ancient establishment, observes : " It took 130 years to convince people of the error of founding such an institution, and the failure to attain the two ostensible objects proposed, namely, saving infant life and making good Protestants, and further to prove to them how mischievous its effects were in a moral point of view."

279. It may be mentioned that the Royal Commission of 1833 recommended that the officers of health should cause all foundlings to be sent to nurse, " and when of a suitable age cause them to be removed to an emigration depot, from whence they may be sent to an institution in some British Colony, which shall be appointed for receiving such children and training and apprenticing them to useful trades or occupations." The officers of health were also to provide in like manner for all orphan children.

Mr. Nicholls observes : " By the aid of the Union machinery apprenticeship may, I think, be safely applied to the placing out of destitute and orphan children, the number of whom in Ireland is very considerable."

280. Sec. 21 of the Act 10 Vic., c. 31, 1847, enabled the Guardians of the North and South Dublin Unions to join in the establishment of a school for the education of children under fifteen years of age who were inmates of one or other of these work-houses, the control of such school to be under a joint board of management, and the Central Authority were empowered to hire or purchase land not exceeding 25 acres, and to erect suitable buildings thereon. The same Act enabled the Central Authority to combine Unions in other parts of Ireland into school districts for the management of children not above sixteen years of age. This section was subsequently repealed by Sec. 2 of 11 & 12 Vic. c. 25, and other provisions made in lieu thereof, whereby the Central Authority might combine any two or more Unions in Ireland for the education of children under fifteen, and the provisions of the previous Act as to hiring or purchase of land and the erection of a school was extended to unions so combined.

Combining of
Unions for
Education of
Children.

281. The Poor Law Commissioners in the year 1855 issued eight Orders combining certain Unions into school districts, the children being transferred to the workhouse of one of the Unions so combined. In their Annual Report presented in 1857, they state that : " The objects sought in forming these districts were economy of funds and improvement in the character of the school arrangements. These advantages have been realised to some extent in the cases in which the experiment has been tried, but we regret to add not without some detriment to the due administration of relief . . . not only orphans and deserted children have been sent, but likewise children of sufficient age to be educated, whose parents were with them in the workhouse, the Guardians of the contributing Unions being desirous to adopt this means of saving the expense of teachers altogether. The consequence has been that many poor women with families have left the workhouse or refused to enter it, although in great need of relief, because they found their children, or some of them, would be sent to a workhouse many miles distant, and preferred begging through the country to relief on these terms." The Orders were subsequently revoked.

282. In 1887, a district school was established in the disused gaol at Trim " for the maintenance and education of children not above fifteen years, being inmates of the workhouses " of Trim, Drogheda, Dunshaughlin, Navan and Kells. In 1893, a similar school was established in the disused workhouse of Glin, for the Unions of Croom, Kilmallock, Limerick, Listowel, Newcastle and Rathkeale. The Vice-Regal Commission, 1906, recommended the abolition of both schools.

District Schools.

283. Under Sec. 8 of the Act 25 & 26 Vict., c. 83, 1862, every orphan child under fifteen years of age relieved in a workhouse is subject to the authority of the Guardians, as it would be subject to the authority of its parents, except as regards the religious denomination of the child. The Guardians could not, however, continue to detain any such child in the workhouse when any relative of the child, whom they considered a fit person to be entrusted with it, claimed its discharge.

Authority of
Guardians over
Children.

284. The Poor Law Act of 1899 enabled the Guardians, in certain cases and under certain circumstances, to assume parental rights up to eighteen years of age, where children were maintained by them.

We recommend that the powers under this Act should be more extensively used in the case of children of parents of proved vicious and vagrant habits.

Boarding-Out

285. Sec. 9 of the Act 25 & 26 Vict., c. 83, 1862, was the starting point of an important departure from the previous policy as regards destitute children. Under that section Guardians were, for the first time, empowered to provide for the relief of orphan and deserted children out of the workhouse. The grounds for this departure, as stated in the section, were that "The mortality amongst infant children admitted into the workhouses without their mothers is very large, and that in other respects the workhouses are not well suited in all cases for the care and nurture of such children during infancy."

Under this section the Guardians could board out the child until it attained five years of age, or with the consent of the Commissioners until it attained eight years of age, should the Guardians consider such extension of outdoor relief to be necessary for the preservation of the child's health. The Act 32 & 33 Vict., c. 25, of 1869, extended the age to ten years. Commenting on the increased numbers boarded out consequent on this enactment the Irish Poor Law Commissioners observe in their Annual Report for the year 1870 :

"It has been erroneously represented that the purpose of this enactment was to bring up children in private families on account of the risk of demoralisation incidental to their being brought up in workhouse schools. This is a false impression, unconnected with anything which has actually existed at any time in Ireland, and originating probably in statements made by writers, chiefly female writers, on the subject of English pauperism and English workhouses. It was solely and exclusively on the ground of health that legislation first took place on this subject, and that young children in Irish workhouses, without mothers, were allowed to be put out to nurse as the only mode in which the maternal solicitude necessary at that tender age could be supplied.

"It has long been notorious, in Ireland at least, that the infant child so placed out soon wins the affection of the foster-parents, and it was felt to be hard upon the latter to make them return the child to the workhouse at five years of age, or if they retained it, to submit to the alternative of maintaining it without further assistance from the poor rates. On this principle the Legislature has been induced to extend the limit to ten years as the age at which it may be presumed that the child, having become thoroughly affiliated and capable of making itself useful, ceases to be likely to be returned to the workhouse.

"It was never intended by the Legislature that healthy children, between five and ten years of age, should be placed out in families for educational or industrial training, for this would be to send them from an institution in which they possess such means of education in a high degree, together with perfect security for sufficient food, clothing and medical care to a home in which there can be only a partial and precarious enjoyment of such advantages, and in which they must be more or less exposed to the risk of evil associations. The Irish workhouse school, shut off as it is from all contact with adults other than the teachers, differs in no respect materially from the boarding school to which parents in a better class of life send their children from home for the purpose of a more systematic course of education and discipline.

"When a healthy orphan, therefore, or deserted child is doing well in the workhouse school, the guardians will go beyond the intention of the Legislature, if they needlessly send it anywhere else for the purpose either of literary or industrial training."

286. The views of the Central Authority have apparently undergone a considerable change during the period which followed this pronouncement. We find that the Local Government Board in their Report for 1907 state that "the aim of all Boards of Guardians should be, if possible, to keep every pauper child outside the workhouse." The Vice-Regal Commission consider that "practically all rate-supported children can be boarded-out with advantage to the children themselves, to the community at large, to the persons who would receive such children and to the ratepayers. . . . For the good bringing up of children a home would, in our opinion, have to be really bad, and not merely faulty, to make it inferior to what would be considered a well-managed, effective institution."

287. The power to board-out given to the Guardians by the Act of 1862 was greatly extended by the Orphan and Deserted Children Act of 1876, which extended the limit of age to thirteen years, and the Pauper Children Acts of 1898 and 1902, which defined the classes eligible for boarding-out, and left in the hands of the central authority the fixing of the age limit. These enlarged powers have resulted in the removal of a large number of

children from workhouses. In 1872 the number under fifteen years of age was 25·5 of the total number of inmates of workhouses, while in 1902 it had dropped to 13·1 per cent.

288. The original intention was that children should be educated and trained in the workhouse. The Poor Law Commissioners in their Report for 1841 state that they had sanctioned an arrangement in one Union for sending children daily to the National school, and that they would attentively watch the result of the experiment, and if successful they would leave it optional with the Guardians to employ teachers in the workhouse or send the children for tuition to a neighbouring school. Apparently the experiment was not a success, as subsequently we find the Central Authority stating that they considered that such an arrangement would be objectionable as “independently of the irregularity and laxity of discipline which would probably arise from the children being permitted to leave the workhouse daily, the responsibility of educating them would be transferred to the teachers, who were not under the authority of the Board of Guardians or the Central Authority.” Education of
Pauper Children.

Owing to statements made in the newspaper press in Ireland reflecting very strongly on the education, training and general treatment of the children in Irish workhouse schools, the Local Government Board, in 1878, caused inquiries to be made into the subject by their inspectors. The Reports received from them are printed in the Annual Report for the year ending March, 1878, and the Board state that they “abound in testimonies favourable to the workhouse schools and to the general success in life of the pupils brought up in them, both male and female.”

The Report of the Poor Law Union and Lunacy Inquiry Commission (Ireland), 1879, was not opposed to the training of children in workhouses. The Commissioners state:—

“We do not think that the results of workhouse training, so far as they can be ascertained, afford any reason for interfering with the existing system of distributing children in Unions. In some cases the system may be advantageously modified, in others the details of management may be improved; but the principle of bringing up the children of each Union in the workhouse of the Union, cannot, we think, be replaced with advantage by any other system. The only attempts to replace it that have been made in Ireland, are those under the School Districts Order and the system known as ‘boarding-out.’ The former was simply an Order directing Guardians to send children from one workhouse to another. Except as a means of economy, or as a means of increasing the efficiency of a school, by increasing the number of children in it, this plan of amalgamating schools has nothing whatever to recommend it. The alleged evils of bringing up children in workhouses is continued—indeed is probably aggravated—while none of the alleged advantages of ‘district schools’ are secured . . . The feeling that induces parents to refuse to allow their children to be sent to schools at a distance may be a mischievous and unreasonable prejudice. But it will always—so deeply rooted is it—present an insurmountable obstacle to the benevolent deportation that is often recommended, of pauper children of all classes to district or industrial schools. The only children who could be so removed would be ‘orphans’ and ‘deserted.’ The large proportion of the fluctuating class, as well as the reluctance of parents to part with them, renders it indispensable to have schools in workhouses. But the removal of orphans and deserted—the permanent class—would so deteriorate the character of workhouse schools as in a little time to justify the reproach of inefficiency to which they are so often and so unfairly exposed. It would, of course, be very erroneous policy, as well as very unjust to the class of permanent children, to retain them in workhouses simply with a view to maintaining a certain degree of efficiency in the schools at the expense of their future success in life. It does not appear that this is so, nor need it necessarily be so. Even if we put aside as of little value the opinions communicated to us as to the success, generally speaking, of workhouse education, it is very plain, we think, that failure, where there is failure, may be ascribed to causes not inherent in the system and which admit of remedy.”

289. Legislation since then is, however, in the direction of the removal of the children from workhouses. Sec. 2 of the Pauper Children (Ireland) Act, 1898, provides that children instead of being taught in the workhouse may be sent daily to a National school if not more than two miles distant, if the managers were willing to receive them, and under Sec. 3 of the same enactment the Central Authority could, on the application of the manager, certify any school other than a National school as fit for the reception of workhouse children, and the Guardians could thereupon contract with the managers of the school for the maintenance, clothing and education of any orphan or deserted child, or child whose parent or parents were inmates of the workhouse. The provisions of this section do not appear to be much availed of up to the present.

290. Where a child is adopted by any person with the consent of the Guardians, the latter are required (Sec. 3 of the Poor Law Act 1899) during a period of three years from the date of such adoption to cause the child to be visited at least Adoption.

twice in each year by some competent person appointed by them, and if not satisfied with such reports they can withdraw the child.

Hiring Out.

Sec. 4 of the Pauper Children (Ireland) Act, 1898, prohibits the hiring out of children under twelve years of age.

Apprenticeship.

Under Acts passed in 1851, 1854 and 1883 the Guardians were empowered to provide outfits and defray the travelling expenses of pauper boys entering into service in the Royal Navy, Merchant Sea Service, and Sea Fishing Service, and under Sec. 1 (5) of the Pauper Children (Ireland) Act of 1898 they could also, with the consent of the Central Authority, pay the apprenticeship fee to any trade or business in the case of any orphan or deserted child over fifteen years of age, who had reached the necessary standard of educational proficiency.

291. The Guardians were constituted the Local Authority for enforcing the provisions of the Infant Life Protection Act, 1897, and the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act, 1904.

292. The Vice-Regal Commission devoted considerable attention to the question of the treatment of children under the Poor Law. They reported strongly in favour of the boarding-out system, pointing out that in Scotland 87 per cent. of the children are thus dealt with and advocating the reduction to the lowest possible limits of institutions for the training of children, and in this their Report may be said to be in harmony with prevailing opinion in Ireland, Scotland, and England. It should not, however, be forgotten that the practicability and desirability of a boarding-out system depends on (a) An adequate supply of suitable homes and trustworthy foster parents; (b) Local supervision either by Committees of volunteers or by female officers; (c) Wise and sympathetic inspection by the Central Authority. On the other hand, it should be remembered that although it may be desirable to dissolve the Poor Law Schools at Trim and Glin, some Institutions must be provided for the children of those committed to detention colonies and for children who are removed from the custody of unworthy parents and for whom suitable homes cannot be found. In our Report on England and Wales we have recorded our opinion that there is no sufficient body of evidence to justify any final pronouncement as to the merits of the boarding-out system when compared with the results attained by training in small institutions. We have therefore recommended that much greater attention should be paid to tracing and recording the careers of children maintained under the Poor Law after they have ceased to be chargeable, and this we would emphasise as regards Ireland. Assuming that the boarding-out system is as satisfactory as its most ardent supporters believe, definite evidence as to results should be made available, but up to the present none has been forthcoming.

Recommendations as to Children.

293. We proceed to summarise the recommendations and suggestions which we have elsewhere made as regards children, in so far as they are applicable to Ireland :—

(a) Effective steps should be taken to secure that the maintenance of children in the workhouse be no longer recognised as a legitimate way of dealing with them.

(b) While strongly advocating the extension of boarding-out as far as possible, we do not recommend any relaxation in the inspection of boarded-out children.

In all cases the fullest inquiry should be made into the character of the foster parents and the suitability and advantages of the home. Unless satisfactory conditions can be assured, the children should be maintained in a Public Assistance institution or an industrial school. It will probably be found that a number of existing institutions in Ireland can be utilised for this purpose.

(c) In all cases of hiring out to service the responsibility for supervision should not cease with discharge from the institution.

(d) Guardians should be empowered to retain the supervision of children up to the age of twenty-one, and parental responsibility should be enforced wherever practicable by charging to the parents the whole or part of the cost of maintenance of the children. Such children should become the wards of the Local Authority up to the age of twenty-one, and one of the parents, if found worthy, or some other responsible person should, if willing to act, be associated with the Local Authority as the official guardian.

(e) Voluntary agencies should be recognised by the Public Assistance Authority as regards the after-care of Poor Law children and should report to it. A system of supervision and record such as prevails in the case of children discharged from Industrial Schools and Reformatories should be applied to children leaving the care of the Public Assistance Authorities.

(f) There should be closer supervision of the condition of children whose parents are in receipt of outdoor relief, and care should be taken that the relief is adequate in amount and that the children are being properly nourished.

(g) No children should be maintained in immoral surroundings, and there should be closer medical supervision of all children under the Poor Law, both indoor and outdoor.

(h) Special provision should be made for the children of widowers and public attention should be directed to the urgent need that exists for such provision.

(d) THE AGED AND INFIRM.

294. The Royal Commission of 1833-6 recommended that legal provision should be made and rates levied for the support of aged and infirm persons who were to be supported in institutions. Under Mr. Nicholls' scheme they were to be offered relief in the workhouse, in the same manner as other destitute persons. He remarks: "Independent of the difficulty of discriminating between those who may fairly be considered as aged and infirm, and those who are not—as well as certain other difficulties, practical and theoretical in the way of making any such distinction—I have found in the state of Ireland no sufficient reason for departing from the principle of the English Poor Law, which recognises *destitution alone* as the grounds for relief, nor for establishing a distinction in the one country which does not exist in the other." The workhouse discipline was in their case to be applied "with the least degree of coercion and inconvenience."

295. In the Act of 1838, although they are not given any *right* to relief, they are placed first amongst those whom the Guardians may relieve at their discretion. The Act of 1847 makes their relief (as well as that of other classes of the destitute) incumbent on the guardians, who may grant them relief either in or out of the workhouse.

296. The workhouse rules provide for the separation of the sexes, whatever may be their ages. In 1893 the Local Government Board addressed a circular letter to the Guardians stating that they would be prepared to consider any proposal to permit husbands and wives over sixty years of age to occupy the same apartments in the workhouse, in accordance with the precedents in England and Scotland. The Guardians, however, apparently were not inclined to carry out the structural alterations incidental to such an arrangement, and nothing was done in the matter.

297. The Vice-Regal Commission recommend that the aged and infirm, of whom there are between 14,000 and 15,000 distributed over the 159 workhouses, should in future be accommodated in thirty-two institutions to be called "almshouses" or such other name as may be preferred. "In these new County almshouses, separate accommodation for aged married couples could be provided, and the inmates could be classed according to conduct and allowed privileges, including permission to wear their own clothes, if any special treatment were considered desirable." (See Paragraphs 137 to 146 of their Report.)

298. The recommendations which we have made in our report on England and Wales are in substantial agreement with those of the Vice-Regal Commission which we have summarised in the preceding paragraph. On the ground both of economy to the rate-payer and increased happiness to the recipients, we desire to call attention to the system of small homes established at Kingston-on-Hull, Woolwich, and certain parts of Scotland, and we are of opinion that when the Poor Law institutions in Ireland are re-arranged, the advantages of this method of treatment should be weighed most carefully. We desire further, to call attention to the supreme necessity of careful inquiry in the granting of out-relief to this class; it must be adequate in amount, and those who receive it should be periodically visited by officers of the Public Assistance Committee, who in many cases would be women, and wherever practicable by voluntary visitors.

299. We further desire to call attention to the recommendation made by the Vice-Regal Commission to the effect that there should be powers of compulsory removal of sick or feeble old people who are without friends to care for them. Similarly, where aged persons are addicted to drink, or are of dirty habits, and are already provided with suitable maintenance in an institution, they should not be permitted to remove themselves from control.

(e) BLIND, DEAF AND DUMB.

300. The Royal Commission of 1833-6 recommended that a public provision should be made for the deaf, dumb and blind poor, such persons being, they consider, peculiarly deserving of public assistance. No mention is made of this class in Mr. Nicholl's reports, nor was any special provision for their relief made in the Act of 1838.

301. Under the 14th Sec. of the Act 6 and 7 Vic., c. 92, 1843, power is given to Boards of Guardians to send any "destitute poor" deaf and dumb or blind child under the age of eighteen years to any asylum approved of for the purpose by the Central Authority, and to pay for his or her maintenance therein. This power is extended to persons over eighteen years of age by Sec. 3 of the Act 41 & 42 Vic., c. 60, 1878, but the amount to be paid in respect of maintenance of any such person is limited to 5s. weekly. Under Sec. 4 of the Poor Law Rating Act of 1876 the expenses connected with the maintenance of blind or deaf and dumb persons were to be borne by and charged against the whole Union, and still continue to be so chargeable, in common with the other expenses of the Guardians under the provisions of Sec. 43 of the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898.

302. Assistance rendered from public funds in the case of the deaf, dumb, and blind or any class of the afflicted poor such as the epileptic, lame, deformed and crippled, may at present involve the disfranchisement of the persons liable for their maintenance. We recommend that this disability should no longer operate.

303. There are several large institutions for these classes in different parts of Ireland. These establishments have all been provided by charitable effort, without any endowment or assistance from the rates further than that paid by the Guardians for the maintenance of persons sent from the different Unions pursuant to the provisions of the Acts above referred to. The Vice-Regal Commission recommend (Par. 136) that local bodies, with the sanction of the Central Authority, should have power to contribute towards the funds of such institutions in addition to defraying the cost of maintenance of the afflicted person. It should not, however, be forgotten that unless the greatest caution is exercised in making grants towards capital expenditure, voluntary charity may be dried at its source.

Experience gained elsewhere supports the view that charitable institutions for the training and education of any class of the young should not be made use of nor subsidised by the Guardians unless the Central Authority were satisfied that the institution in question was suited to its purposes and efficiently administered.

(f) RELIEF TO PERSONS IN OCCUPATION OF LAND.

304. In a previous portion of this Report, allusion has been made to the deplorable condition of the agricultural population of Ireland seventy years ago.

Mr. Nicholls observes:—"There being no legal provision for the destitute, and the subdivision of the land into small holdings having destroyed the regular demand for labour, the only protection against actual want, the only means by which a man could procure food for his family was by getting and retaining possession of a portion of land. . . . So long as this portion of land was kept together it was possibly sufficient to supply his family with a tolerable degree of comfort, but after a time he would have sons to provide for and daughters to portion off, and this must all be effected out of the land—until the holding of 10 or 15 acres became divided into holdings of 2, 3, or 5 acres. After a time the same process of subdivision is again resorted to until the minimum of subsistence is reached, and this is now the condition of a large portion of the Irish peasantry. Land is to them the great necessary of life. There is no hiring of servants. A man cannot obtain his living as a day labourer. He must get possession of a plot of land to raise potatoes, or starve."

305. There is nothing in the original Act of 1838 specially dealing with this class, but Sec. 10 of the Act 10 and 11 Vic., c. 31, 1847, laid down that no person in occupation of over a quarter acre of land could be deemed to be a destitute poor person, or relieved out of the poor rate. The Poor Law Commissioners state in their Annual Report for 1848 that a great number of persons in the occupation of land are destitute. Some of these surrendered their entire holding, and others surrendered all except their cabin and a quarter acre, in order to entitle themselves to relief. Reference has already been made to the Act of 1862, which enabled a person in occupation of land to get *indoor*, but not outdoor relief. In 1880 the Local Government Board, on the advice of the law officers, issued a Circular stating that the prohibition as to affording outdoor relief to persons in occupation of land only applied to the occupier himself, and that if his wife or any member of his family were permanently disabled from labour by reason of old age, infirmity, or bodily or mental defect, or disabled from labour by reason of severe sickness or accident, the Guardians could, under Sec. 1 of 10 Vic., c. 31 relieve such person, being destitute, either in or out of the workhouse, and further that when an Order under Sec. 2 of that Act¹ was in force in a Union, the wife and children of a man holding more than a quarter acre of land may be relieved if destitute out of the workhouse, although healthy and able-bodied. Relief to landholders.

Relieving officers are empowered to afford provisional relief until the next meeting of the Guardians in all cases of sudden and urgent necessity, whether the person be in occupation of land or not, but the Guardians cannot continue outdoor relief to such persons if in occupation of more than a quarter acre of land. If, however, new circumstances arise making the case again one of sudden and urgent necessity, the relieving officer can again afford provisional relief.

306. The Vice-Regal Commission state that the "quarter acre" clause was introduced as a means of compelling the small occupiers to surrender their holdings to their landlords. When landholders became destitute, they could obtain neither indoor nor outdoor relief, as long as they retained their holdings. They should, therefore, give up their holdings or starve. Before the repeal of the Corn Laws, the small occupiers were profitable tenants; after that event grazing farms were a better security for rents. Hence it became an advantage to the landlord to get rid of the small tenants. By one of time's revenges the small tenants are busily engaged at present in getting rid of the landlords. Quarter acre clause.

The policy of this "quarter acre" clause has now merely an historical and antiquarian interest, for the establishment of small holdings both in England and in Ireland is regarded by Parliament as a sound policy and is encouraged and promoted.

307. What we have to consider is not the origin of the "quarter acre" clause or the intention of its proposer, but whether under the system of Public Assistance which we have outlined for Ireland this clause will be a useful safeguard against the abuse of outdoor relief. With their recommendation for the repeal of the "quarter acre" clause, the Vice-Regal Commission coupled the further recommendation that all outdoor relief should be charged to the electoral division. The small holders affected by the repeal or retention of this clause are generally massed together in certain electoral divisions, which, it will be remembered, were originally co-terminous with the estate or estates of one or more landlords. In other electoral divisions the landholders are, as a rule, substantial with few, if any, of the small class; nay, even the whole of some electoral divisions are in the hands of a few big graziers. In the thickly populated electoral divisions of the Western Unions practically all the occupiers are near the border line of distress; and a wet season or other agricultural mishap drives them across the line. If outdoor relief be given, the cost will fall exclusively on the occupiers, who now pay all poor rates and who will also be the recipients of the relief. Hence it is obvious that there could be no general recourse of the small landholders to outdoor relief, and that electoral division rating would be, in this matter, not so much a safeguard as an absolute preventive.

308. In proposing that Home Assistance, as well as other forms of Public Assistance, should be a County charge, we must consider carefully whether the admission of landholders, when destitute, to a claim for Home Assistance might not, under a system of County rating, open the door to grave abuses. It will be seen from the Memorandum on this subject by two of our colleagues which is printed in the Appendix that while the people

¹ Vide page 47.

have a horror of entering the workhouse, they have little hesitation in accepting outdoor relief; and it is not improbable that the receipt of small weekly sums of money, in the shape of old-age pensions, by many small landholders in those poor electoral divisions will completely obliterate from the minds of their neighbours any misgiving or reluctance to claim Home Assistance.

309. Moreover, the number of landholders having one acre or less is rapidly increasing under the beneficent working of the Labourers Acts. In 1902 the number of such landholders was 73,352; and in 1907 it was 82,598.¹ The number of landholders under the Labourers Acts up to the 31st March, 1908, was about 23,000. The probable number in the course of the year, 1910, having regard to the land authorised to be acquired under these Acts during the past year will be 46,000. Part III. of our Report for England sets forth the flagrant abuses of outdoor relief which were prevalent in England under the Act of Queen Elizabeth, (43, Eliz. 1603,) and which required drastic treatment from a Royal Commission and from Parliament in 1832-34. Over many parts of the country the farmers who were members of the Vestries gave the agricultural labourers a weekly sum of relief, and in consequence paid a smaller wage. Again, the farmer employed the labourer who had a large family, for otherwise the entire support of the family would fall on the rates of the parish.² The unmarried man and the man with only one or two children could get no work as long as the man with a large family was without work.³ Parish relief came as a supplement to wages, and in relief and wages the labourer was paid, not in proportion to the amount of work done, but in proportion to the size of his family. The labourers lost all spirit, independence and manliness. Their wages were miserably low, and they had the hearts and led the lives of paupers and beggars rather than of free, independent, upright men. At the age of 14 the children might obtain parish relief on their own account. Then they began to procure their own crust of bread and piece of pork; and cases occurred in which charges of stealing food were made by children against their parents, and by parents against their children. In sickness mothers refused to nurse their own children without payment from the child's parish relief, and daughters refused to nurse their parents, though they all lived under the same roof.

310. The evils of this system of indiscriminate parish relief were numerous and far-reaching. They injured the character and the morale of individuals and of classes, they seriously affected the productive power of the workers, and greatly hampered the progress of the country. "The wit of man," wrote Sir George Cornewall Lewis, "cannot foresee a tithe of the evils to which, under peculiar circumstances, outdoor relief may give rise. The united sagacity of the whole human race could not, in the reign of Elizabeth, have predicted the varied and subtle forms of mischief which are developed in the Report of the English Poor Law Commission of 1832."

311. The Vice-Regal Commission wrote in their Report (par. 251):—"It is well known that in Ireland, and we believe in other countries also, out-door relief is often, and we believe we may say, generally, given to persons who, although poor, are by no means destitute of resources and means of livelihood. Instead of out-door relief being the sole support of the destitute, it has become merely an item in the receipts of the poor person. . . . In some cases relief is given to supplement chance earnings, such as those of a charwoman, or as an addition to the occasional sums of money sent by absent children. This is not at all what was intended by the Poor Law, but the system appears to be popular, and it seems to have taken root."

312. Obviously there is a growing tendency in Ireland to regard out-door relief as a legitimate supplement to small earnings and to consider it a cheaper and more appropriate form of relief than indoor relief. In such a state of public opinion, and in view of the increase of small landholders, and of our proposal to make Home Assistance a County charge, we cannot concur in the withdrawal of the disqualification of landholders which would follow from the simple repeal of the "quarter acre" clause.

(g) LUNATICS.

313. The earliest legislative provision for this class in Ireland appears to have been the Act 46 Geo. III., c. 95, 1806, which enabled Grand Juries to provide for the future treatment of lunacy within certain very restricted limits, viz., by adding wards for the purpose to existing houses of industry, and by presenting for their support a sum

¹ Agricultural Statistics, Ireland, 1902 and 1907.

² Report of Royal Commission of 1832, pp. 77-80.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-84.

not exceeding £100 a year in the case of any single county or county of a city or town. To what precise extent this provision was taken advantage of by county authorities is not now very clear, but that it failed to realise the objects contemplated by the authors of the enactment would appear clear from the course of subsequent legislation on the subject.

The condition of the lunatic poor in Ireland about this time appears to have been truly terrible. In a Report made by the Surgeon-General and Physician-General of Ireland in 1816, it is stated :—

“Lunatics and idiots have been for many years past promiscuously huddled together in the same apartments, and even placed frequently in the same beds with helpless paupers of sane mind, while a crowd of female lunatics have been dispersed indiscriminately among the pauper wards, to the utter destruction of decency and moral feeling throughout the whole establishment.”

One witness examined before a Committee of the House of Commons in 1817, states :—

“I have seen three and certainly two lunatics in one bed in the House of Industry. I have seen, I think, not fewer than fifty or sixty persons in one room, of which I believe the majority were insane, and the rest paupers not affected with insanity. I have seen in the same room a lunatic chained in a bed, the other half of which was occupied by a sane pauper.”

Another witness giving evidence before the same Committee states :—

“There is nothing so shocking as madness in the cabin of the Irish peasant . . . where a strong man or woman gets the complaint, the only way they have to manage is by making a hole in the floor of the cabin, not high enough for the person to stand up in, with a crib over it to prevent his getting up. The hole is about 5 feet deep, and they give this wretched being his food, and there he generally dies.”

314. In the year 1817 was passed the first Act for the establishment of districts lunatic asylums in Ireland (57 Geo. III. c. 106), and this was followed in 1820 by an amending Act, (1 Geo. IV. c. 98,) both of which, however, were repealed by a further Act passed in 1821 (1 & 2 Geo. IV. c. 33). A number of amending Acts were passed from time to time. From the period when the Act 1 & 2 Geo. IV. became law, down to the passing of the first Irish Poor Law Act, the only accommodation provided for the lunatic poor was that available in ten district asylums, the Cork House of Industry, and the several county gaols, and this was notoriously insufficient.

315. Mr. Nicholls considered that pauper idiots and lunatics who were not dangerous might be advantageously provided for in the several workhouses, where a lunatic ward should be prepared for such of them as might be unfitted to mingle with the other paupers. The attitude of the Central Authority after the passing of the Act of 1838 is clearly stated in the following extract from a letter of the Poor Law Commissioners to Lord Eliot, dated September 29th, 1842 :—

“The Irish Poor Relief Act made no provision for the relief of insane and lunatic persons, as such, but recognised that relief should be administered solely on the grounds of destitution, and if a really destitute person were an idiot or a harmless lunatic, he would be as fit a subject for admission to the workhouse, if the Guardians so decided, as any other destitute individual.”

“To provide for cases of this description which, it was presumed, would be occasionally admitted, the Commissioners have caused idiot wards to be prepared in the several workhouses for the accommodation of persons of this class. There are, or rather there will be, 130 workhouses in all, and the number of idiotic and lunatic persons for whom accommodation will thus be provided in the several workhouses is 2,300. . . . Whether this will be sufficient to meet the wants of the country may, perhaps, be doubted.”

316. Although several additional asylums were opened from time to time, they were found to be inadequate to meet the rapidly increasing demand upon them. As a palliative for this state of things, provision was made in the Acts 38 & 39 Vic. c. 67, 1875, whereby, upon voluntary agreement entered into between Boards of Guardians and boards of governors respectively, chronic cases of lunacy not being dangerous might be transferred from the asylums to the workhouses, and paid for therein, subject to the approval of the Local Government Board and the Inspectors of Lunatics. Great difficulty was, however, experienced in giving practical effect to such an arrangement, and at present there are only three workhouses in which lunatics are received from asylums in pursuance of this section, and the total so received is only 103.

317. In the Report of the Poor Law Union and Lunacy Inquiry Commission (Ireland), 1879, will be found a *resumé* of the progress of legislation on the subject. The Commissioners were of opinion :—

(1) That portions of certain workhouses and detached buildings which can be dispensed with might be advantageously appropriated for the accommodation of a certain class of lunatics.

(2) That for the better care, relief and treatment of the poor who are lunatics, idiotic or imbecile in mind, or otherwise afflicted with mental disease, it is expedient that a complete reorganisation of the whole Lunacy administration be effected. For which purpose they recommend :—

(a) That under the provisions of Sec. 15 of 8 & 9 Vic. c. 107, the existing district asylums should be classified, reserving one or more, as may be required, in each province as “lunatic hospitals,” especially for the curative treatment of the insane.

(b) That the remaining district asylums should be appropriated as “lunatic asylums” for the accommodation of the chronic insane requiring special care. A certain number of this class would be accommodated in the “lunatic hospitals,” as about fifty of each sex would be required for the service of those establishments.

(c) That the inspection of the lunatics at large should be made one of the duties of the dispensary medical officers, who should be remunerated for this duty, and whose certificate that any one of this class is neglected or improperly cared for, should be made the ground for action by the lunacy authorities.

(d) That the accommodation for the third or harmless class who are at present in lunatic asylums, in workhouses, or at large in a neglected state be provided by the appropriation of spare workhouse buildings, a sufficiency of which is to be found in each province, thus also meeting the very general complaint of Guardians being compelled to maintain superfluous workhouse accommodation.

The Commission adds :

“Thus each province would be provided with three classes of lunatic establishments, *i.e.*, with one or more lunatic hospitals, in which undivided attention could be given to the curative treatment of lunacy in its earliest stages, with first class lunatic asylums in which the chronic cases requiring special care would be treated, and with second class or “workhouse auxiliary asylums” for harmless cases not requiring special care. The first class asylums, with their superintendents and staff would still be available for the reception on first committal of urgent cases, and worked in concert with the hospital establishments, would receive their cases when they are classed as probably incurable, and would in their turn pass on cases, when they become harmless, to the workhouse auxiliary. All classes of the lunatic poor would thus be provided for.”

318. Sec. 9 of the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898, requires the county council to provide and maintain accommodation for all the lunatic poor, and the Guardians make no payment in respect of them. Sec. 76 of the same enactment empowers them to provide auxiliary lunatic asylums for the reception of chronic harmless cases not requiring special care and treatment in a fully equipped lunatic asylum; and any such auxiliary asylum may be either a separate asylum or a department of the district or county asylum. County councils are also authorised in certain circumstances to take over disused workhouses or other suitable buildings in the possession of the Guardians to be used as auxiliary lunatic asylums for the reception of chronic harmless lunatics.

319. The Local Government Board, in a circular letter, dated July 17th, 1902, urged Guardians to endeavour to gradually reduce the number of insane in workhouses by making a selection of the worst cases from time to time, and applying for their admission to the asylums. In this way it was hoped that all lunatics would be ultimately removed from workhouses to lunatic asylums. The number of epileptics and other lunatics and idiots in Irish workhouses on December 31st, 1907, was 3,568, as compared with 3,238 at the end of the previous year.

320. The Vice-Regal Commission deals fully with the question of lunatics and idiots. Their recommendations are in effect that the insane should be removed from Poor Law institutions and be detained in auxiliary or other asylums under the control of the lunatic asylum authorities and that sane epileptics should be placed in separate institutions, for which purposes disused workhouses will be available. With these recommendations we concur.

CONCLUSIONS.

321. It will be observed from a perusal of the preceding pages that our general proposals for Poor Law reform in Ireland are in accord with the principles laid down by the Vice-Regal Commission.

Our principal recommendations are :—

BOARDS OF GUARDIANS AND WORKHOUSES.

- (1.) That Boards of Guardians and general workhouses be abolished.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AUTHORITIES.

(2.) That the County or County Borough be in future the area of administration and of charge for the relief of all classes of necessitous persons, and that no exception from this principle be permissible, unless the Local Government Board is satisfied that such exception would in each particular case be in the best interests of administration.

(3.) That the new local authority for the relief of the necessitous be known as the Public Assistance Authority and be a Statutory Committee of the County or County Borough Council. One half of the members of the Public Assistance Authority may be members of the Council of the County or County Borough--the other half is to be selected from outside the Council from among persons experienced in the work of public assistance.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE COMMITTEES.

(4.) That the local administration of assistance be under the control of Public Assistance Committees appointed by the Public Assistance Authority. That such Committees include a certain proportion of persons experienced in the administration of Public Assistance or other cognate work nominated by the Urban and Rural District Councils, and by Voluntary Aid Committees,¹ where such exist. That the area of administration for the Public Assistance Committee be that of the present Union subject to necessary alteration with the approval of the Local Government Board, with a view to bringing the area within the boundaries of the County or Borough, and to forming uniform areas for rating purposes.

(5.) That Public Assistance Committees investigate all applications for assistance and inspect, supervise, and administer all Public Assistance Institutions within their area.

INDOOR RELIEF.

(6.) That we concur with the Vice-Regal Commission in recommending that there should be classification by institutions ; that in each county the required number of the existing workhouses should be converted into specialised institutions for different classes of inmates ; and that the remaining workhouses should be closed.

MEDICAL RELIEF.

(7.) That the present dispensary medical service be a County service under the control of the Public Assistance Authority, and that the areas of the districts, where possible, be enlarged in view of present population.

(8.) That County infirmaries, workhouse and other rate aided hospitals be, co-ordinated and that medical relief generally be under the management of the Public Assistance Authority, and that a County Ambulance system be established.

(9.) That a County Medical Superintendent Officer of Health be appointed, who shall also discharge the duties of Bacteriologist.

(10.) That Public Assistance Authorities have power to appoint Nurses for nursing in the homes of the necessitous, in the same way as Boards of Guardians at present appoint midwives.

OUTDOOR RELIEF.

(11.) That Outdoor Relief be continued under proper safeguards and be chargeable over the whole area of the Public Assistance Authority.

(12.) That the prohibition of outdoor relief to landholders be not withdrawn.

(13.) That widows with one legitimate child to be eligible for outdoor relief.

See paragraphs 173-175 of this Report.

ABLE-BODIED AND VAGRANTS.

(14.) That the able-bodied inmates of existing workhouses, and casuals and Vagrants, be dealt with on the lines recommended by the Vice-Regal Commission, and that Labour Colonies and Industrial Institutions be established, as recommended in the English Report.

(15.) That one or more "Detention Colonies" or "Labour Houses," under the supervision of the General Prisons Board, be established for the reception of persons who are not amenable to ordinary discipline, or who neglect or refuse to maintain themselves or their families.

CHILDREN.

(16.) That effective steps should be taken to secure that the maintenance of children in the workhouse be no longer recognised as a legitimate way of dealing with children.

(17.) That children be dealt with generally on the lines recommended by the Vice-Regal Commission; but whilst strongly advocating the extension of boarding-out as far as possible, we do not recommend any relaxation in the inspection of boarded out children.

(18.) That a system of supervision and record such as prevails in the case of children discharged from Industrial Schools and Reformatories be applied to children leaving the care of the Public Assistance Authorities.

(19.) That the power under the Poor Law Act of 1899 of assuming parental control be more extensively used in the case of children of parents of proved vicious and vagrant habits, and that such children should become wards of the local authority up to the age of 21 years.

(20.) That in all cases of hiring of children out to service the responsibility for supervision should not cease with discharge from the institution.

(21.) That Voluntary agencies should be recognised by the Public Assistance Authority and report to it as regards the after-care of children.

(22.) That special provision should be made for the children of widowers.

THE AGED AND INFIRM.

(23.) That the necessitous aged and infirm be accommodated in a number of specialised institutions, and preferably in small Homes or Alms Houses.

(24.) That where outdoor relief is granted to this class it must be adequate in amount and the recipients should be periodically visited by officers of the Public Assistance Committee, who might be women, and wherever practicable by voluntary visitors.

(25.) That there should be powers of compulsory removal to institutions in the case of sick or feeble old people, without friends to take care of them.

AFFLICTED POOR.

(26.) That the Public Assistance Authority be authorised to contribute to the maintenance of the deaf, dumb, and blind in institutions.

(27.) That a person should not be disfranchised on account of assistance rendered to a dependant, being deaf, dumb and blind or belonging to any class of the afflicted poor such as the epileptic, lame, deformed, &c.

LUNATICS, IDIOTS, &c.

(28.) That lunatics, idiots and sane epileptics, be maintained in asylums or institutions as recommended by the Vice-Regal Commission, and that disused workhouses be used as Auxiliary Asylums for the purpose.

UNEMPLOYMENT.

(29.) That the existing provision for the relief of exceptional distress provided by Section 13 of the Local Government Act, 1898, is better adapted to the circumstances of Ireland than the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905.

That the Unemployed Workmen Act be discontinued, and that should grants hereafter be necessary in Ireland for the purpose of relieving exceptional distress, from whatever cause arising, they should be in proportion to the expenditure from rates on relief operations in each rating area.

(30.) That it is advisable to postpone applying to Ireland our recommendations as regards Labour Exchanges and Unemployment Insurance, until the results of their adoption have been ascertained in Great Britain.

GRANTS-IN-AID.

(31.) That the Probate Duty and Medical and Educational grants in aid of local taxation be re-apportioned on a more equitable basis, and that the Local Government Board have power, where necessary, to withhold such grants.

MISCELLANEOUS.

(32.) That the Local Government Board have power to order the erection of any new institution that may be necessary in the area of a Public Assistance Authority.

(33.) That the Local Government Board have power to authorise the Public Assistance Authority to acquire land compulsorily.

(34.) That the number of district electoral divisions, and consequently the number of rural district councillors, be reduced.

322. Four of our colleagues publish in the form of a "Separate Report" a dissent from this section of our Report. They have already submitted their proposals for Ireland in their dissent from our Report on England and Wales.

The dissent attached to the Irish Report is therefore merely a criticism of our recommendations, and all those who read and consider them will see that this criticism is neither fair nor accurate.

In these circumstances it calls for no further notice.

323. In concluding the Irish section of our Report, we desire to express our appreciation of the great help given us by Mr. J. E. Devlin, of the Irish Local Government Board, whom we appointed Assistant Secretary for the Irish branch of our Inquiry. His exact knowledge of the Irish Poor Law, and his intimate acquaintance with the condition, needs, and habits of the Irish people, were invaluable to us during our visit to Ireland. His ability, information and industry have been unsparingly placed at our service in the preparation of this section of our Report. We desire to call the attention of the Heads of his Department to those facts.

ALL OF WHICH WE HUMBLY SUBMIT FOR YOUR MAJESTY'S GRACIOUS CONSIDERATION.

(Signed) GEORGE HAMILTON.

✠ DENIS KELLY.*

H. A. ROBINSON.*

S. B. PROVIS.

F. H. BENTHAM.

THOMAS GAGE GARDINER.

C. S. LOCH.

J. PATTEN MACDOUGALL.

THOMAS HANCOCK NUNN.†

L. R. PHELPS

W. SMART.

HELEN BOSANQUET.

OCTAVIA HILL.‡

Thory

R. G. DUFF, *Secretary.*

J. E. DEVLIN, *Assistant Secretary.*

April 14th, 1909.

* See Memorandum on p. 88 87

† Reserving those points upon which I have expressed my dissent in a Memorandum added to the English Report of the Majority in regard to the Appointment of Public Assistance Committees.—T.H.N.

‡ I was unable to visit Ireland, and do not feel able to judge of the expediency of those parts of the Report which differ from the recommendations made for England. So far as the two Reports coincide, my signature of the English Report shows my agreement.—O.H.

Separate Report on Ireland by Prebendary Russell Wakefield, Mr. F. Chandler, Mr. George Lansbury, and Mrs. Sidney Webb.

We regret that we are unable to agree with the Report of the Majority of the Commissioners.

That Report seems to us to make recommendations different in character from the proposals of the Vice-Regal Commission, whilst expressing a general approval of those suggestions. These recommendations, as more explicitly set forth in our colleagues' Report for England and Wales to which they repeatedly refer, include in our judgment the following fundamental points :—

(1) The abolition, not only of the Boards of Guardians, but also of all control by the elected representatives of the ratepayers over the public provision for the poor, and over the expenditure of the Poor Rate ;

(2) The establishment, in each County and County Borough, of a new and wholly autonomous Poor Law body (under the name of "Public Assistance Authority"), on which the elected Councillors, of whom there need not necessarily be any at all, are expressly prevented from being in a majority ; and over which, once appointed, the County or County Borough Council is to have no control, either with regard to policy or with regard to expenditure ;

(3) Moreover, even this Public Assistance Authority, on which there will presumably be some elected Councillors, is not itself to decide upon applications or grant relief. These functions of the present elected Boards of Guardians are to devolve upon local committees which are to be formed wholly by nomination ; and these "Public Assistance Committees," are to be themselves subordinated to "Voluntary Aid Committees" composed of representatives of the Charity Organisation and other societies. An important feature of this proposal, explicitly stated elsewhere, is not here brought into prominence. To these committees all applicants are to apply in the first instance ; and in case of refusal of aid by them, the "Public Assistance Committee" is to be bound to assist the applicant, if at all, "in some way less agreeable" than the Voluntary Aid Committee would have done. Thus the Voluntary Aid Committee is to set the standard of relief ;

(4) In opposition to the proposals of the Vice-Regal Commission for the complete separation from the Poor Law of the whole treatment of the sick, it is now recommended that the whole Public Health service, including the County Bacteriologist, and all the County Infirmaries and Fever Hospitals, together with the Dispensaries, should become a Poor Law function ; that the sick poor now under the County and County Borough Councils should become paupers ; that the control of these County Infirmaries and Fever Hospitals should be taken away from the County and County Borough Councils, and handed over to the non-elective "Public Assistance Authorities" already described ; and that the public treatment of tuberculosis should be equally a matter for the Poor Law, and the Poor Law alone ; and that, with regard to the treatment of this or any other disease, infectious or not, charges should be made, wherever possible, on the relations of patients legally liable to contribute to their maintenance, and even on those not legally liable ;

(5) The provision of meals for children attending school who are found to be suffering from lack of food to be exclusively a Poor Law function, involving the inclusion of the children and their parents as paupers.

(6) The repeal of the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905, the abolition of the existing Distress Committees and the cessation of the grants hitherto received by them, without the establishment, until some indefinite future time, of any provision for workmen out of employment other than that of the Poor Law.

(7) The continuance of the present legal prohibition of Outdoor Relief to able-bodied men, and to occupiers, however aged or infirm, of a quarter of an acre of land ; the abolition even of the existing workhouse provision for this class ; and the substitution, for women as well as for men, of "industrial institutions" and "detention colonies," *in which alone, however deserving may be the case, able-bodied men, able-bodied women, and persons in occupation of a quarter of an acre of land may be relieved.*

We do not feel that the Commission has been able, in the limited time at its disposal, to make any such investigation into Irish conditions as would warrant such momentous departures from the proposals of the Vice-Regal Commission, nor do we feel that the evidence which we had before us supported any such departures. Indeed, the plan as a whole, involving as it does, a great extension of the area of the Poor Law, the bringing into the net of pauperism of whole classes at present outside its scope, and the withdrawal of the present provision for the sick, the unemployed and the poor generally, from the control of the elected representatives of the ratepayers, has not been suggested by any witness whatsoever.

We deprecate any hasty legislation on the lines of this Report. We cannot refrain from alluding to the calamitous results which ensued to Ireland from the action taken seventy years ago. Then, as now, an influential Irish Commission—that which sat under Archbishop Whately in 1833-6—had made far-reaching proposals based on a special consideration of the needs of the country, involving the separate treatment, outside any Poor Law, of particular classes. Then, as now, the conclusions thus arrived at were reviewed by English authority, a review (the celebrated scamper through Ireland of Mr., afterwards Sir George Nicholls) which, after relatively hasty enquiry, led to contrary proposals, based on the inclusion of the public provision for all classes (the children, the sick, the aged, the Unemployed) within a single Poor Law, and under a single Poor Law Authority. Unfortunately, as we can now see, the Ministry of the day, and the Legislature, preferred to act on the principles thus hastily adopted from England; and the Irish Poor Law Act of 1838 became law. We agree with our colleagues in thinking that the results are such as to make radical change now imperative.

We do not feel sufficiently conversant with Irish needs and Irish conditions to present, without more prolonged investigation, any detailed criticisms of the scheme of reform so carefully worked out by the Vice-Regal Commission. We fully concur with the main principle of that Report, if not in continuing the present Boards of Guardians, at any rate in retaining the whole of the local provision for the various classes of necessitous persons under the control of the elected representatives of the ratepayers; subject only to such general rules as may be laid down by the Legislature, and to such conditions as may from time to time be attached to Grants in Aid from the Exchequer. We do not think it either possible or desirable, in Ireland any more than in Great Britain, to put the power of deciding Poor Law policy, and of spending the ratepayers' money, in the hands of any other bodies than directly elected Councils, which may well be the existing County and County Borough Councils. We entirely agree, too, with the recommendation of the Vice-Regal Commission that the treatment of the sick should be wholly removed from the relief of other classes, and should be entirely dissociated from pauperism. The development of a County Hospital Service, apart altogether from the Poor Law, has already gone further in Ireland than in England and Wales. We have received important testimony from the highest official authority, the Medical Member of the Irish Local Government Board himself, in favour of transferring the whole Poor Law Medical Service to a united County Medical Service, combining prevention and cure, sanitation and treatment, hospital and dispensary and domiciliary work. This weighty testimony is not re-butted in our colleagues' Report. The necessity for putting an end to the present overlapping and confusion is admitted by the majority of the Commissioners; but their proposal is to bring to an end the separate existence, not of the Poor Law Medical Service, but actually of the Public Health Service, which deals with disease as disease, irrespective of the affluence of the patient. Henceforth, it is suggested, the case of the sick person should fail to be considered by the proposed new "Public Assistance Authority," "Public Assistance Committees," and "Voluntary Aid Committees," who are to deal with applicants as paupers. This is not the way in which typhus has been successfully dealt with in Ireland. It is opposed to the way in which tuberculosis is now being dealt with in Scotland. We cannot believe that to make every tuberculosis patient a pauper; to invite him to run the gauntlet of the Voluntary Aid Committee and the Public Assistance Committee; to levy (or to threaten to levy) the cost of his hospital or sanatorium treatment, being a pauper, on his aged parents or his struggling children; and to refuse him all home assistance if he is occupying a quarter of an acre of land, is the way to remedy the "white plague" of phthisis that now decimates Ireland.

One important question, specially referred to us, was not within the scope of the enquiries of the Vice-Regal Commission, namely, the provision to be made for the Unemployed. In the larger towns of Ireland the problem of Unemployment appears to us to present much the same features as it does in Great Britain. In the poorer agricultural districts especially in the West and North West, the problem takes the form of recurrent failures of the harvests on which the occupiers of small holdings depend for

subsistence, or of the fisheries with which some of them eke out a livelihood. A special feature in Connaught and Donegal is the annual migration of about 20,000 men to Great Britain to help in the harvesting between Perth and the Fen Country. Allowing for these and other minor differences, we cannot see that the distress from Unemployment, demoralisation and pauperism caused by the system of Casual Labour, and its resultant chronic Under employment that we have described in our Report on England and Wales, and the urgent need of grappling with the whole problem, is any less in Ireland than in Great Britain.

Notwithstanding this fact, our colleagues propose the repeal of the Unemployed Workmen Act, and the abolition of the machinery set on foot under that Act, without substituting anything in its place other than the Poor Law; and under this, it must be remembered—herein differing from the English law—Outdoor Relief to able-bodied men or women, or to any occupier of as much as a quarter of an acre of land (except, temporarily, in cases of sudden or urgent necessity) is definitely forbidden.

Imperfect as is the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905, we think it should, nevertheless, be retained until some better provision is made in its stead. We see no reason why the alternative measures proposed for England and Wales should be withheld from Ireland. We have, in our own Report on this subject for England and Wales, elaborated a complete scheme for dealing with the whole problem of the Able-bodied and the Unemployed on national lines. We have there stated that, in our judgment, it is now administratively possible, if it is sincerely wished to do so, to remedy on the lines that we have laid down, most of the evils of Unemployment; to the same extent, at least, as we have in the past century, diminished the death-rate from fever and lessened the industrial slavery of young children. That statement, after renewed consideration, we reiterate and emphasise.

We have pointed out in our Report on England and Wales the extent to which the proposals of the Vice-Regal Commission appear to us to need modification, in the light especially of the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905, and the Old Age Pension Act of 1908, and the development during recent years of the Public Health Service. We do not feel competent to prepare in detail any separate scheme of reform for Ireland. The English Poor Law and the Workhouse System, unhappily forced upon Ireland in 1838, have remained alien and abhorred. Ireland, even more than England or Scotland, appears to us to be ready for the policy of "Break up the Poor Law and abolish the Workhouse." In our judgment any attempt to set up a new Poor Law, and a new Poor Law Authority under whatever name—would be a repetition of the mistake of 1838. We have already indicated tentatively in our Report on England and Wales the way in which the various proposals with regard to the treatment of the infants, the children, the sick, the mentally defective, the infirm, the aged and the unemployed able-bodied respectively, to which our investigations have led us, might be made applicable to Ireland. To these proposals and tentative suggestions we need, therefore, now do no more than refer.

(signed) H. RUSSELL WAKEFIELD.
FRANCIS CHANDLER.
GEORGE LANSBURY.
BEATRICE WEBB.

Memorandum by The Bishop of Ross and Sir Henry Robinson.

Four of our colleagues, Rev. Prebendary Russell Wakefield, Mr. F. Chandler, Mr. George Lansbury, and Mrs. Sidney Webb, have expressed themselves very strongly against our recommendations for Ireland. They had already made a separate Report, dated January 23rd, 1909, in which they proposed definite and detailed recommendations, not only for England and Wales, but also for Scotland and for Ireland. We, the members appointed on the Commission specially to represent Ireland, and to apply to the Irish problems our life-long knowledge and experience of that country, desire to offer a few observations on the proposals, put forward as suitable for that country by our four dissenting colleagues.

They agree with us as regards the abolition of Boards of Guardians and the adoption of county-rating for all Poor Law purposes. But the most important part of their other proposals, and that upon which the whole structure of their alternative scheme depends, is that outdoor relief should be taken out of the hands of the elected representatives of the ratepayers or their nominees and entrusted to salaried officers to be appointed by the county councils.

The various committees of the councils will, it is true, be permitted to submit recommendations for outdoor relief to these paid officials—registrars as they are styled—but the registrars are to be at liberty to act upon them or to disregard them as they see fit.

We do not believe that committees in Ireland would be found to take any part in the administration of outdoor relief upon these terms; it would be too much to expect intelligent business men to spend their time investigating applications if they were powerless to ensure relief being given to those who, they were satisfied, were fit recipients.

The number of paid officials in Ireland is already a heavy tax on the local ratepayers, and we strongly deprecate the proposal to flood the country with a new class of paid officer, even though the councils are to obtain the compensating advantage of paying for persons of the superior order of intelligence which will enable them to keep the committee straight and correct their blunders in the matter of outdoor relief.

What would happen in the event of a council electing a registrar who was no better informed than the committee themselves on the subject, the authors of the scheme do not appear to have considered.

The only other point to which we must refer is the solemn warning uttered by the Minority against our scheme of reform, on the ground of its being the result of an inquiry as hasty and perfunctory as that which they describe as Sir George Nicholls' "celebrated scamper" through Ireland in 1837.

This criticism comes somewhat badly when accompanied by an alternative scheme prepared by four members of the Commission, two of whom did not visit Ireland at all, while the time spent in the country by the only member who accompanied the Commissioners on their visits was even shorter than that occupied by Sir George Nicholls' visit, which, on account of its brevity, has called forth such a severe condemnation from the Minority.

(signed) ✠ DENIS KELLY.
H. A. ROBINSON.

Note by Dr. Downes.

I feel that my acquaintance with Irish affairs is insufficient to warrant my signing the Report.

(signed) ARTHUR DOWNES.

LIST OF APPENDIX VOLUMES HAVING REFERENCE TO IRELAND.

The following volumes of the Appendix will contain information relating to the administration of the Poor Laws and the subject of unemployment in Ireland:—

Minutes of Irish Evidence with Appendices.—APPENDIX VOLUME X.

Evidence as to unemployment in Belfast and Drogheda.—APPENDIX VOLUME IX.

Reports, Memoranda, and Tables, prepared by certain of the Commissioners.—APPENDIX VOLUME XII.

Reports on the effect of Outdoor Relief on Wages and the condition of Employment by Mr. Thomas Jones.—APPENDIX VOLUME XVII.

Report on the effects of Employment or assistance given to the Unemployed since 1886 as a means of relieving distress outside the Poor Law in Ireland, by Mr. Cyril Jackson.—APPENDIX VOLUME XIXB.

Reports of Visits to Poor Law Charitable Institutions and to Meetings of Local Authorities in the United Kingdom.—APPENDIX VOLUME XXVIII.

Statistical Memoranda and Tables relating to Ireland.—APPENDIX VOLUME XXXI.





